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A Magazine of Cleverness

To Amuse, Not to Instruct

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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DECAYING TEETH AND THE DILATORY

THE BEAUTY OF PERFECT TEETH

TIME and again people read and hear rather pointed remarks concerning false teeth—pointed as well as unromantic, but nevertheless true. This being so, the question is—Why on earth do most of us allow our teeth to decay from day to day, week to week, and even year to year, only to suffer the penalty of having to wear false teeth for the rest of our days?

Modern science has made the filling, bridging, and preservation of teeth an absolutely painless operation; at least, modern dentistry as practised by that celebrated dental specialist, Mr. Goldberg, of Anglo-American reputation, whose dental surgeries are at 27, New Cavendish Sreet, Harley Street, London. His method of repairing teeth is as painless as his method of extracting them, when extractions are positively necessary, for he staunchly discourages the pulling of teeth if there is the slightest chance of building them up and making them perfect again.

Dilatoriness is, perhaps, the greatest cause of the decayed condition of our teeth. From day to day, week to week, and month to month, people put off that promised visit until pain drives them to distraction. On the other hand, the excruciating pain could be prevented and the tooth made perfect in a few minutes by having the cavity cleaned and filled. But no! Decay is allowed to expose the nerve. Another cause is that fear which most of us have of the buzzing, boring drill. Banish that fear at once, for Mr. Goldberg's method of modern dentistry reduces that sensation to a negligible minimum. In America one enters a dental parlour and has his or her teeth repaired in very much the same way as one enters any of our big stores on this side to purchase a pair of gloves. Over there the timely filling of teeth has become a habit. Consequently false teeth are becoming most rare in the States. Then, too, Mr. Goldberg's new process of "bridging teeth" enables one to have two, three, or even four false teeth fitted in a row, perfect, everlasting, and without the use of a plate. The bridge is so constructed as to be invisible, while holding every tooth fast to the gums, which in a very little while grow down between the teeth, absolutely defying detection of the fact that such teeth are false.

The following is, perhaps, the cleverest piece of dental work performed by Mr. Goldberg. The tooth had been allowed to decay, and had broken off to the very root, and in this condition the patient went to have it extracted. Did he extract it? Not he? At once he killed the nerve, filed the broken root level just past the gum, so that it slightly hung over the root of the tooth. Then he prepared a false top, which was fastened to the root by a pin and cemented. The joint where the false tooth met the root was surrounded by a band of gold, and the operation was completed as painlessly as you please, and within a few weeks the gum had grown down in its natural position over the gold band. It is now absolutely impossible to detect that the patient has a false eye-tooth, which is good for another 20 years. This is mentioned just as an example of how skilfully and neatly teeth are treated nowadays, and Mr. Goldberg's fees are reasonable, notwithstanding the fact that his elaborate parlours are in the midst of the world's specialists' district—27, New Cavendish Street, Harley Street, London, W.—Mayfair 2022. —(Advt.)

NOTE.—These Pronouncements of Pope & Bradley are sometimes serious

THE HYMNS AND ERRS OF LOVE

By H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

"Annexationists"

AGES ago, in the first days of war, an elderly non-combatant Hun revealed his soul in some doggerel called the "Hymn of Hate."

The venom of his spleen was too much for his digestion, and he spat it forth to the immense pleasure of his kind and age.

His "Hymn" became famous, but even in the ghastly trenches Youth laughed at it and derided it.

Since that day, throughout the tortured world literature, art and beauty, the clean and lovely things of Life and Love have been cast aside and mocked at, while the old men, in their love for Youth, gleefully croak their hymns of hate, and will croak until death mercifully relieves us of their presence.

But youth takes comfort in the certain knowledge that the universal Nature, merciful, but inexorable, silent, but inevitable, will put a term to the tyranny of the Aged.

The Day will come when there will be a shortage of Old Man Power.

Civilisation has collapsed as a result of rulings founded on Hate, dictated by the Aged, the Impotent, the Sterile, the Unwise. Youth will discard all the doctrines of its decadent fathers and build the new world on the foundations of Love.

And should elderly philosophers and cynics deem that the ruling of Youth by Love will lack in force let us demand of them what they have achieved by the force of their rule by Hate.

Women loathe them.

The old and discredited generation who now rule the earth will be eternally damned by history as responsible for dragging a world of beauty to the depths of ugliness, ghastly in its uniformity.

By Individuality the Artist mind makes the world beautiful, and achieves deathlessness.

Youth and Love are individual. By individuality Youth becomes great, by uniformity is made a clod.

The passion of age is the weakness to Hate; the passion of Youth is the power of Love.

Whatever we covet we strive to annex. But the cravings of Age are not the desires of Youth. The annexations of Age are sordid, of the earth. The annexations of Youth are Beauty, Love, and the wonderful joys of Life.

The Aged dream of annexing the earth; they whose proper annexation is but six feet of it! The whole world awaits passionately its annexation by Youth, who knows no boundaries.

Joy is within ourselves and Love finds its habitation only in the soul of Youth, where it can live in wonderful dreams, creating new and beautiful ideals.

In Love's battles the wounds are borne with joy, because Love is worth all pain and suffering.

And the battles are fought because Love is catholic; like the knight-errant of old he wears his lady's favours on his casque, and now the favour is of the Roses, now of the Lilies, now of the Passion Flower, and now of the Silken Rags of Life.

But these lists are not for the Aged, for the adventurous soul is dead in them, and, barren of joy, through rheumy eyes they stare at the tournament of Love, and seek to warm their palsied hands at the fires of Hate.

And Love laughs.

"—fret till your proud heart break,
Go, show your slaves how choleric you are
And make your bondmen tremble. Must I budge?
Must I observe you? Must I stand and crouch
Under your testy humour? By the gods,
You shall digest the venom of your spleen
Though it do split you; for from this day forth
I'll use you for my mirth, yea, for my laughter
When you are waspish."

* * * * *

London will welcome the return of Youth. The West End Restaurants are very ugly, and on account of the Young Man shortage, are filled with podgy Bureaucrats with arrogant airs and vulgar Profiteers with atrocious manners. Their obesity is suggestive of illicit meat coupons.

* * * * *

All this has apparently nothing whatever to do with Pope and Bradley, who, without preying upon them by profiteering, continue to clothe Youths who are the Men of England.

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Vol. LVI DECEMBER, 1918 No. 4

TWO TRAGEDIES

By June Gibson

I

IN the garden.

A brilliant peacock, trailing plumage of gold and bright blue and emerald green, strutted haughtily down the path.

A sombre little violet nestled among green leaves.

The peacock crushed the violet with its claws as it stood by the water's edge gazing upon its gorgeous reflection in the pool.

II

In the garden.

A handsome young Neapolitan gardener worked among the flowers, whistling joyously, and laughing at the fright of a humming-bird that was startled by the gleam of his spade.

A shy young girl watched him timidly from the rose bushes, with eyes of love.

A beautiful woman came down the path and saw the Neapolitan and the shy young girl.

Breaking off a thorn from a rose-bush, she pressed it into her white finger.

"Boy," she said softly, brushing against him, "there is a thorn in my finger."

CONFESSION may be good for the soul, but it doesn't get one much reputation for sense.

EVERY man likes to have a woman explain him to himself.

WHY IS IT?

By Elinor Maxwell

HE seldom tells me he loves me.

He never addresses me as anything but "Mrs. Cameron," or "Frog-legs," and all the time I am dying to be called "Dearest beloved."

He never comments on the perfectly exquisite perfume for which I get into debt.

He doesn't like the way I dress, and he says my mouth is too big.

He wonders why I wear my hair puffed out over my ears, and he detests my curls.

He is really much too fat, his nails are terrible, and his eye-brows too long.

When we fuss, he always tries to make me think that I was in the wrong and that I am the one who owes the apology. He invariably ends by saying, "Oh, well, you're just a child after all, and I really ought to spank you," and all the time I realize that I am a fine, sensible woman—safe and sane, calm and collected.

He calls me "a cute kid," and way down in my heart I am secretly longing to be taken for a woman of mystery!

He says I'm his "little doll" and that I have "darling little ankles," and all the while I am trying to look like Nazimova.

He makes fun of me, and teases me, and annoys me. He says I'm too young for almost any use at all. He doesn't consider my opinion worth a whoop in the bucket, and when I try to talk seriously of Life's Great Problems, he spoils everything by kissing me.

And, notwithstanding all this, I'll be darned if I don't love him more than anyone else in the world!

MODESTY and conscience are identical. Both originate in the fear that someone may be looking.

WHEN the girl you kiss gives as good as you give, you are not getting firsts.

LIFE is a comedy to him who owes and a tragedy to him who pays.

THE DREAMERS

By L. M. Hussey

I

LIKE a sardonic duellist, fortune countered the irony of Paul Braun with an irony of her own; his diabolic parody of his own art gave him the appreciative celebrity and the ease of circumstances that half a lifetime of sincerity had failed to secure him. He understood the joke, and in his embittered way he laughed at it.

He wrote his Symphony with the Muted Tubas under an urge bitter and appalling, a shaft hurled madly at his own ideals, at the folly of his sincerity, at the soul of his sense of beauty. He designed this magnificent grotesquerie at a moment when his faculties must have trembled over the chasm of madness, like the life of a man poised between existence and oblivion in the crisis of a grave sickness. He composed it as a dreadful and excoriating sarcasm. Out of the symphonies that had been the labour of his earlier years he ripped those lovely and ineffable themes, refrains too perfect in their beauty for an easy recognition, and thrust them by the ears into this parody of himself, the grand concerts, symphonic in bulk and design, for the muted tubas. Fragile lyric ecstasies, little poems of sound, scored in his earlier inspiration for the flutes, he transcribed to the trombones and bassoons, whilst broad choral passages, grandly purposed for the choir of strings, were given an unearthly voice by the sardonically augmented section of the tubas, plugged with mutes.

This embodiment of his art in motley he put on paper during the immediate weeks following the rejection of his Eleventh Symphony. The Eleventh had been wrung from him at the expense of prodigious labour, during the nights of a cold, long winter. Into it he had put all his maturer conception of beauty, all his deftness at orchestration, his adept cunning in sounds. Mary Braun, his wife, had been near him during the whole period of its writing down. Upon her he had spent those accumulated irritabilities that were thrown off in his brain like toxins during the ferment of creation. She sat in a chair in the same room, too far away from the light, endlessly sewing, never saying a word. Her face was bent down over her work, as if she found a fascination in the silent gymnastics of her fingers. When he spoke to her she lifted her head for a moment, revealing the almost expressionless placidity of her small, white face.

He would address her with his pencil poised over the ruled paper, his forehead wrinkled in a heavy frown, perplexed by some elusive chord sequence.

"Mary, what in the name of heaven are you doing?"

"You know well enough, Paul."

"By God, you're looking older every day!"

"That's not unnatural, is it, Paul?"

"What the devil did I marry you for?"

She ceased to look at him, and bent her brown eyes to her work once more.

"I tell you, Mary, I'd give ten years of my life for an adequate answer to that question! What sort of a woman are you for me? Yes, and what do *you* find in *me?* You don't enter into my life; you're as unaware of the intimacies of my brain as my old shoes or my old coat. Tell me this: how in the

name of everything have I managed to live with you all these years?"

His words did not hurt her; she was used to them. They were a part of his eccentricity that in twenty years of intimacy had ceased to be startling. When he spoke in this manner, this irrational and extravagant strain, he seemed wilful and boyish to her, too young to be accountable, a child in tirade. A certain maternal tenderness warmed her. Stealing an occasional glance, she saw his animated face, his lifted, sardonic eyebrows, black, like two heavy strokes of a charcoal pencil, his pallid, emotional face, his flexible lips, speaking. He was incorruptibly exuberant and foolish: he was dear to her.

"I think, Mary," he said, "there must have been some abominable and trivial witchery that made you attractive to me. Perhaps you once had a way of making your lips smile, or a trifling expression in your eyes, or an inconsiderate wave to your hair that touched my imagination like a spark. I assure you of this, my woman: I haven't an idea of what it was now. I must have been a more prodigious ass than ordinary when I was young!"

Staring at her, he forgot her; the symbols of sounds materialized before his eyes like visions; he bent over the paper on the table and wrote down upon it a new measure of his music. The symphony took shape, growing under his fastidiousness like a cathedral, intricate and imposing, luminous, Gothic, lovely. His assurance had never been more profound, his faith that even a pedant would feel the pulse of inspiration that beat boundingly in these interwoven themes. As he composed the final measures of the last movement, a *rondo* in form, he dreamed of the opening performance, seeing the choirs of the orchestras before him, the commingled tones of their instruments rising and falling in his ears like the grand calling of a single celestial voice. He sent the manuscript to the conductor of a celebrated orchestra; in three weeks it was returned to him without comment.

The Eleventh Symphony of Paul Braun was rejected! The astounding folly of this fact reacted on his brain like a curious drug, a distorting alkaloid. His anger turned not only upon the obtuseness of those who had examined his work, but upon himself for the useless persistence that had given him the skill to compose it, for the ruinous steadfastness that had kept him through half a lifetime to a lofty concept of the beautiful. In an ironic rage he played the harlequin with his ideals; he composed the Tuba Symphony. He wrote with an astonishing and unusual speed. At night, after he had gone to bed. Mary gathered together the scattered sheets of his manuscript, strewn over the floor like leaves dropped from an autumnal tree, and piled them compactly on his table.

The sheaf of these pages grew larger each day

II

THE organization that had rejected his Eleventh Symphony accepted for performance this Rabelaisian piece for the tubas. Braun sent it to them as a final thrust of his irony; the note that requested him to call and arrange for the details of presentation amazed him at first and moved him finally to disquieting outbursts of laughter. Later he discovered the accident that had brought about its acceptance.

It was a matter of political reorganization within the orchestra. Levine, the conductor, was still in his place, but an important phase of his authority had passed into other hands. For more than fifteen years the orchestra had been subsidized by an ancient devotee named Siebert. The æsthetic sensibilities of the old man had congealed a couple of decades before; he was quite without an ear for the new and daring in music. Levine, a capable conductor, and a learned pedant, gave only those compositions that adhered to the "classical" form. Old Siebert died; his rights passed into the hands of his son. The young man was a dilettante of

some discernment, without his father's prejudices. Shortly before the Tuba Symphony was mailed to the orchestra, he upset the old order by assuming with Levine a joint examination of every manuscript offered to their organization. To young Siebert, then, belongs the credit of giving the first orchestral production of a work by Paul Braun.

Braun called on Siebert early one afternoon. In the executive offices of the orchestra he was first confronted with a girl, who took his name back through an inner door. She returned after a moment, smiled, told him that Mr. Siebert was waiting for him. Braun passed through a gate and through the door from which the girl had just emerged.

He found himself in a large, sunny room. One man was seated at a desk, another was standing near him, smoking a cigar. Braun recognized the latter; he was Levine, the conductor. The man at the desk stood up and extended his hand cordially. He had a pale, enthusiastic face, an innocent blue eye, blond, crisp hair. He stepped toward the composer and took his hand.

"Mr. Braun," he said, "it's a great pleasure to know you. Are you acquainted with Mr. Levine?"

Braun and Levine exchanged greetings. The three men sat down. Braun glanced from moment to moment at the conductor, restraining, with each quick scrutiny, his desire to smile sardonically. Levine was extraordinarily suave; his somewhat shiny face was characterized by a faint, inevitable smile, as if in perpetual propitiation. He was nearly bald; close to the back of a glossy, pink head a tuft of black and grey hair straggled about like spears of tough grass. Siebert began the conversation.

"Mr. Braun, this is an extraordinary work you have offered us," he said. "We're immensely desirious of producing it. We'll make almost any reasonable arrangement with you. It will require some reorganization of the orchestra, but that's a minor matter. Is this the first composition you've offered us, Mr. Braun?"

"No, it is isn't," said Braun.

"No? May I ask what was the nature of the work you were good enough to let us look at?"

"In the past three years," said Braun slowly, malevolently, "I've offered you three symphonies, any one of which is a better piece of work than the one you've elected to play."

Siebert met the composer's ironic gaze with his blue, frank eye.

"I'm very surprised at that," he said. "You must forgive us if you can. There's no doubt, in the press of everything that must be put through here, we've been regretfully lax in the examination of manuscripts. That's a thing of the past, I hope. Anything you have, Mr. Braun, is certain to interest us."

Levine looked off into the space of the room and said nothing.

The composer glanced from the conductor to the young man at the desk. He spoke slowly to the latter.

"Siebert," he said, "I'm very glad, for the sake of your orchestra, that you've decided to play my symphony. Your explanation of the other rejections was unnecessary because it was absurdly inadequate. You've had the opportunity of securing from me, in the past, the only music of any moment ever written in this country. But you preferred dead bones to a living body. Well—the orchestra is to be congratulated on its change of policy!"

When he had finished there were several seconds of an embarrassed silence. The young man at the desk coughed a time or two; finally he opened several drawers noisily, pulled out some sheets of white paper, secured a pencil, looked up ingratiatingly at Braun.

"Mr. Braun," he said, "if you would move your chair a little closer we could—"

He plunged precipitously into a business discussion.

III

When Braun left that afternoon the day for the first rehearsal had been ap-

pointed. He came down a flight of dingy marble stairs into the street with an unwonted ease in his spirits. His embattled years seemed vague behind him, like a toiling forgotten after a sleep. He had had his lordly dreams, and now they were marshalled in his mind almost naïvely, like the visions of a boy before the venture of accomplishment. He had seen himself other than obscure, and the applause of those who could understand had been precious to his fancies. He walked home slowly, giving a substance once more to his old imaginings.

When he came in his wife was preparing his supper. Her pallid face was a little reddened from the steam of cooking. A few moist streaks of her brown hair straggled limply against her neck. She looked at him with a slight expression of concern.

"You're late, Paul," she said. "Didn't you remember that you have three pupils to-night? They're so hard to get—we don't want to lose any. . . ."

He stared at her, smiling incomprehensibly, his lips giving expression to a half-veiled contempt.

"Let them go to the devil!" he exclaimed.

"Paul!"

"For twenty years I've taught music to flappers and boobs that have no more instinct for it than you have. I'll never teach another one in my life. That's done, that's past, that's in limbo, by God!"

He looked at his wife and a brief scowl passed over his countenance like the shadow of a discontent. A few feet distant from him she stood with her white face turned to his own, her brown eyes, from which the years had taken away their lustre, meeting his, her lips parted uncomprehendingly. At this moment she displeased him more than with that superficial irritation that was ordinary. She could not resonate to these moments of his success; she had never sensed the measure of his achievement; her mind was the harbour of trivial hopes, paltry wishes, inconsequent desires. Upon the lightness and the exultation that had possessed him, over the renewed substance of his nearly forgotten dreams, a heaviness and a depression was superimposed, like a ponderable vapour poured upon the misty levity of his mood. He met his wife's eyes frowning.

Looking at him, Mary apprehended that a favourable turn of fortune had come to him. By some means these curious labours that had taken all his striving were to secure a material realization. She felt glad, but her sense of pleasure was mingled with her frequent emotion of pity, maternal in its quality. Perhaps he was wrong; his whole life seemed to her a pitiable extravagance, the wild game of a child at play. He was not like other men; he was strangely impractical and young. But then, if he were to be a success, much to be wished might come out of it. With a tender and sentimental swiftness her mind traversed a score of difficult years, and dwelt in moments so long gone that their reality was now no more than a pallid but precious wraith; she remembered him then, and the extraordinary tenderness of him, the fragile delicacy of his touch, the ceremonial of his kisses. She thought that disappointment must have made the ensuing change in him. Perhaps, if now he had whatever it was he wanted, they might in a way live again. She had an impulse to stretch out her arm and touch him, and stand on her toes and kiss his cheeks. But she remembered her cooking and she turned to it with a faint thrill.

But she saw little of him in the days immediately following. Indubitably a change had come about in their conditions. Paul had innumerable outside engagements. Once he brought a blond young man home with him, and the two went through the stacks of Paul's old manuscripts. She was surprised to observe the obvious respect with which the young man attended her husband. She experienced a curious bewilderment; she missed the long evenings alone together; she missed his sudden rages and his scathing vituperation. He

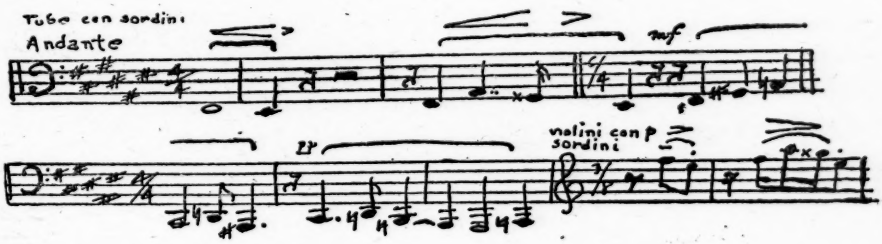
seemed unaware of her nearness now; he ignored her.

IV

THE night for the playing of the Tuba Symphony approached. Braun had heard his music in rehearsal and the sardonic strangeness of it enchanted him. He was eager to learn its effect upon that part of the public capable of understanding it. Early on the evening of the performance he was in the hall talking to Siebert. Both men were enthusiastic; Siebert looked at the composer with admiration—his face seemed lighted with a white fire, his black brows cut the pallid surface of his forehead like two streaks of sable.

The auditorium filled rapidly; there was an unusual hum in the air, for the curiosity of this symphony had already been noised about. From his box, Braun watched the orchestra come in. The cacophony of tuning began; the strings commenced their empty scraping of the fifths, the brasses slid across the octave in a parody of the chromatic, the flutes executed obscure coloratura, the lower-pitched woodwinds manœuvred scales grotesquely. Braun's eyes glistened, his lips parted and his white teeth glittered nacreously, he drew in short breaths as if to taste a savour in the air.

A short, awkward man, with a polished bald head, came upon the stage and took his place with the first violins; the audience clapped; it was the concertmeister. A moment later Levine walked out upon the stage, bowed to the applause, turned to his orchestra and touched his baton to the desk. A hush like the sudden dying of a passing wind came over the auditorium. The flared ends of a great rank of tubas shifted forward, and a sustained tone marked the beginning of the symphony.

The first movement opened with a dolorous statement of the principal theme voiced in the muted bombardons, to the undulatory accompaniment of the bassoons, bass clarinets, the cor anglais and the celli. It was but seven measures in length, giving way to a three-eighth condemnation of the same material for the muted violins. Here the woodwind and brass, *staccato*, supported it restlessly for fourteen measures, whereat the hearer was plunged at once into fresh lamentations from the tubas. Thus:

At the end of the first movement there was considerable applause; but Braun, looking about him at the audience, saw many puzzled faces; there was a quality sinister and tantalizing in these parodied themes, the beautiful vested in the grotesque. But the gargantuan outburst of the third movement convinced every dilettante in the place of the sheer orchestral brilliance of this symphony; at its conclusion Levine bowed repeatedly to the clapping. Braun sat with his white countenance staring out on the enthused faces, his pulses beating swiftly. He did not hear Siebert and his companion when they entered the box; he turned only when the young man spoke to him.

Siebert was accompanied by a young woman. The composer regarded her a moment and then stood up from his

chair. She was smiling at him, looking fully into his face as if he were a page to be read, her head tilted back a little, her body poised forward at a slight inclination. Young Siebert stepped a pace or two toward Braun and made her known to him.

"Mr. Braun, my cousin, Miss Dunlap," he said. "Laura is quite carried away, like the rest of us, by your music. Old Levine is doing well enough, don't you think—although it probably hurts him."

The girl put out her hand; he took it.

"I could hardly persuade George to bring me here," she said.

Siebert looked at her reproachfully; he protested.

"That's the way you repay me!" he exclaimed. "Yet I was only doing my duty—a hundred people have asked me to-night if the composer were in the house; they wanted to meet him. I've got to protect Mr. Braun—there are too many enthusiasts . . .

Braun laughed, smiled at Siebert, smiled at the woman.

"But Siebert," he admonished, "there are instances when your zeal can carry you too far!"

The girl turned triumphantly to her cousin.

"Ha!" she cried, "you see how very neatly you're let down a peg or two, young man?"

Levine had returned to begin the fourth movement; Siebert stepped back a pace.

"I must rejoin my party," he said.

"But you'll stay here and listen to the fourth movement?" Braun asked the girl.

"That will be delightful! Of course I will," she said.

Braun drew a chair aside for her; Siebert left them; they both sat down. The bassoons opened the rondo with an ironic and elephantine execution of a swift passage.

V

THE composer watched the girl beside him, forgetting his music in the scrutiny of her half-turned face. He thought her admirable, alive with loveliness. Her enthusiasm touched her cheeks with colour, as if a powder of carmine flowers had been deftly sifted upon them. Her jetty hair swept low across her ears, revealing only the tips of them, like pallid buds. She carried her head at a gracile backward tilt, and the curve of her white throat was like the line of a supple bow, drawn back a little. A *crescendo* of sound came out from the orchestra, almost of substance and material; it seemed to enfold him and the woman near him as in a chromatic cloak. His imagination was touched to flame; she appeared a part of his music, the jewel of his sense of beauty at the heart of it, triumphing over the sinister parody, the bitterness of his sarcasm, the gaudy assertion of his irony.

She listened to his music, but her consciousness was more of his eyes upon her. She felt the fascination of his personality; although she was not looking at him, she had before her the clear impress of his face—the flexible lips, the dark, keen eyes, the heavy strokes of his eyebrows. Her senses were alert; she thrilled to the newness and difference of him—he had no little gesture that did not express his different quality. She knew too that he found her pleasant, for in a few moments that had been manifest in his way of looking at her. Her fancy was kindled like a fire and she sensed the intimacy they would be certain to have, a glamorous future, sweeping her up body and mind into the thrill of keen sensations, and the sword-like crossing of glittering thought. She turned to him with a start when he put his hand upon her arm; she saw that the orchestra was no longer playing.

"Did it interest you as much as that?" he asked.

The crowd was standing up; the shuffle of feet and the murmur of voices superseded the sounds of the orchestra; the musicians were moving off the stage.

"Such strange music!" the girl exclaimed. "Tell me why you wrote it!"

Braun arose.

"Will you go with me and have a bite to eat?" he asked. "You're right—and the symphony is not in my ordinary vein. I'll confess the whole thing to you while we're at table."

"Delightful! That's delightful!" she cried.

Her smile glowed on her lips like a gem. Wishing to capture her alone, and to avoid Siebert, he hurried her from the box. He waited for her in the foyer; she came out to him wearing a black cloak that revealed flashes of a coloured lining and over her jetty hair was a green, sheer scarf. She put her hand through the crook of his arm and they walked out together.

They went to a restaurant and sat down at a table placed against the wall; a waiter hurried away with their order. On the table was a little lamp with a red fringed shade concealing a small taper-shaped electric bulb; it threw a rosy glow over their faces. The room was not wide and on the other side the wall was set with a line of flat mirrors that doubled all the occupants. Looking across, Paul could see their two selves, and the charming profile of the woman seated opposite him.

"Tell me about your music," she said to him.

There was a profound and moving flattery in her interest. At that instant he realized his sense of a deep fitness in these moments, and so it was apparent to him that he was fulfilling old dreams. It was in these terms that he had seen life years before; the writing of music, the pleasure of hearing it performed, the communion with a beautiful woman. At once he thought of his wife; she was in manifest contrast, his reality against what he had hoped for. But he forgot her again in his pleasure with the girl and her nearness. She satisfied his concept of a woman; she should be adorning, the accompaniment to the gracious moments of life, never otherwise than lovely. He looked at Laura; she waited for him to speak.

"Do you know," he asked her, "that this is the first of my music I've heard performed?"

"But George tells me the orchestra is to play four or five of your symphonies this season."

"Yes, I'm to be given a hearing now; even a publisher is making arrangements to bring out my songs. But that's after a wait as long as the years you've lived."

She shaped her lips into a melancholy smile.

"You've not been happy," she murmured. "But it will be different now!"

"You forget that I still have a wife," he said.

She stared a second, then laughed; the rose-coloured light gave her white teeth the glints of rubies.

"I knew you were married; I asked George all about you. You speak as if it were a great misfortune. There are many unhappy men in the world, then!"

"Yes, many, no doubt, although I'm only positive about my own case. Being married has made me an old man; some time it will be the death of me. I've sat across the room from her and in the absorption of writing a dozen measures of music, forgotten her. Then I would look up. Great God! I'd think—this woman is my wife! She is not beautiful, but otherwise; she hasn't a notion of what I'm doing. Why did I marry her? I've asked her that; she will not answer me. I was young, and it seems impossible that she could have been pretty. Perhaps she had a way of opening her eyes, or a certain curve to her mouth, meaningless and signifying nothing, that set me to dreaming. Young men dream and their dreams are their disaster!"

"It wouldn't be discreet for me to sympathize with you," she said.

He smiled again and bent toward her a little.

"I've had no one to ask about you. You aren't married?"

"Oh, no!"

"But you have a history of some sort. Talk about yourself a little!"

"How dreadfully you accuse me of a history! I'm much too young for that

—I'm just a poor girl brought up in the city. And I'm an orphan too—don't sympathize with me because I can't remember either my father or mother. Off and on I live with my aunt and her nephew—George you know—then we quarrel and I go away for a time. Just now we don't speak; I'm living alone."

He listened to her, watching her, and discovering a felicity in the sound of her voice, the movements of her lips as they shaped her words, the little gracious gestures that accompanied her thought. After a time she asked him once more to talk of his music and again the flattery of her interest stirred him with an unused sense of content and fulfilment. He talked to her then about his symphonies, and forgetting her limitations, expounded his entire æsthetic theory. His words were spoken with a progressive enthusiasm; as he talked she grew less attentive to their meaning and more fascinated with the fervour of their delivery. She watched the increasing flush that came like a dawn in the pallor of his cheeks, the quick glances of his dark eyes, the supple response of his features to the emotions he invoked. She felt with him a comradery that warmed her like a caress.

When he stopped they were both silent for some seconds. Braun stared off into the room like one who sees not corporate realities, but the more distant and immaterial figures of visions. Suddenly he was recalled from his esthusiasm to immediacies; he noticed that they were almost alone in the big dining room.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "They'll be asking us to get out of here in a moment."

The woman followed his glance; she laughed at him in raillery.

"And what a dreadful hour for a married man!" she cried.

Her merriment jarred upon his sensibilities; he made no return. They both got up and the composer held her green scarf in his hands and dropped it lightly over her shoulders; the yielding stuff floated about her with the intimacy of a mist.

They walked out together and he got a taxi. He gave her street and number to the driver; in the cab he sat near her, but did not touch her. When they stopped he got out and helped her to the pavement; they stood together in the night and he still retained the hand she had given him in alighting.

"I have never met anyone like you," he said. "I must see you many times again."

His face was lifted and the light of a distant arc fell across it like a ghostly ray. She thought he looked touchingly boyish and naif; he moved her with an unusual tenderness. She softly laughed, pressed his hand, bent a little closer to him.

"This is only the beginning, my Master," she said.

In a moment she had released her hand, run up the steps of the apartment house and was indoors.

VI

Braun went back to his home. The rooms were dark when he entered them. His wife was asleep; when he walked into the bedroom and turned on the light he saw the outlines of her figure in the bed and he looked down at her. Her head was turned to the side on the pillow, the short strands of her hair were scattered negligently on either side; a wisp, as if clipped off and nourished no longer, fell wanly over her forehead. Braun saw her stir and turn in the bed. He swiftly shut off the light; he had no wish to talk to her.

The next morning when he arose his breakfast was ready for him. He discovered Mary by the table looking at the morning newspaper. As he entered the room she raised her eyes and fixed them upon him with a deep reproach.

"Why didn't you tell me, Paul!" she exclaimed.

"What are you talking about?"

"They played your music last night

and your name is in the paper this morning . . ."

"Ah!" he cried. He snatched the paper from her hands and discovered the report of his symphony. He found that the reporter was an ignoramus; but that did not matter—with a naif pleasure he enjoyed the importance of a column devoted to himself. He read it twice and then dropped the paper on the table. His wife had arisen and was placing his breakfast before him; he sat down and began to eat.

She watched him, standing a little behind him. His neglect in the matter of the performance, his assumption that she would not even care to know, was assuredly characteristic; yet it stirred Mary like an awakening. Now their circumstances were indubitably changed; the old days were gone. By some means, she was not fully aware how, Paul had achieved a success, and the hopes he used to confide in her in the early days of their marriage had somehow been realized. As she looked at him she felt some of the secret zest of a plotter; she would connive and intrigue for a restoration; she would scheme to bring back the gracious quality of their intimacy that had been shadowed and obscured in the bitterness of unprofitable years! Her eyes rested upon his head, with the inadequately combed hair ruffled all over it, thick and strong, like a tousled mat of sable. Something in this characteristic disorder touched her to tenderness; responding to an impulse, she put out her hand, her fingers were about to run through the length of his hair, when he stood up abruptly, dropping his napkin to the floor. He went out of the room without looking at her.

Yet she felt herself strong with an adequate patience; she was assured in her power to awaken him with forgotten intimacies.

But she was disappointed that no opportunity came to her that morning, no chance of a beginning; he was busy and she was unable to talk to him. She desired a quiet hour—the evening would be better after all—and then, whilst he smoked, she would go back to times of which neither had spoken for years. She would speak to him reminiscently, recalling certain moments that had been, asking him if he remembered, this day and that day, a certain second, a certain hour, a thing he had said to her, a reply she had made. She thought the chance might occur that evening. But again she was disappointed, for Paul went out shortly after lunch and he did not return the rest of the day.

He walked to the nearest telephone booth and looked in the book for Laura's number; finding it, he called her. He heard her voice answering him and she recognized his the second he greeted her.

"Don't let's talk now!" she exclaimed. "Come and see me! I'll expect you just as soon as you can get here!"

He hung up the receiver and hurried out of the telephone booth. She expected him, she was waiting for him! He had seen her only once, in the night, and he wondered how she would appear to him in the daylight; he was eager to see her standing with the sun falling over her like a robe of fire. He breathed quickly and he was filled with an immense zest of living. A new fluid, other than the torpid blood he had known, seemed to pass keenly through his veins, a swift, subtle fluid, volatile and pungent. He was as if awakened, newly alive, brought out and made to breathe again from an enchanted and accursed sleep.

VII

At her apartment she had already given instructions to the elevator boy; when he arrived he was taken up immediately. She opened her door to him, took both his hands and drew him in; they faced each other a moment, saying nothing. Her eyes were greatly lustrous; her exuberance astonished him. She stood before him as if from a fresh incarnation, bright and plumaged new from a fabulous pyre. He had found in her the preceding evening a touch at least of a languor, a tint of melancholy, a drooping softness. These

were gone, with not a reminiscent trace.

She spoke to him first.

"You're going to give me the whole afternoon?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed!"

"And the evening, too?"

"I want to!"

"I knew you would. What shall we do this afternoon? I want to go out a little while. Would you like to see my place here first? In a way, it's forbidden ground, you know. My aunt, for instance, is never allowed within these doors!"

She finished on a mock dramatic note, laughed, slipped her hand into his arm, and drew him with her across the room.

"I live here with just a maid," she said. "But this afternoon we're alone, to ourselves. And I do most of my own cooking. I love to cook. Do you want me to cook your supper for you to-night?"

He stopped suddenly, smiling at her, admonishing her.

"The Lord help me!" he exclaimed. "Aren't you going to give me a chance to say anything at all? You've asked me a dozen questions already—and never waited a second to see what I'd have to answer them!"

"Never mind! I've plenty more questions to ask you. I'll make you talk soon enough; I'm going to ask you everything about yourself; you'll be awfully tired of talking. . . . This room we're in is a comfortable place where I sit and read or play the piano, or just sit and do nothing at all."

She took him by the arms and whirled him round in a mechanical pirouette; he envisaged a confused picture of chairs, cushions, lamps, a piano, a half a dozen pictures, a disorderly table with books scattered over it.

"And beyond this room is a dining-room, and back of that a little kitchen, and on the other side of the corridor there are several bedrooms. We don't want to see them now, do we? Wait till I get my wraps on!"

In the instant she had gone; a perfume of her lingered in the air where she had been like a fragrant ghost. Braun laughed: her exuberant mood made him joyous. He looked about the room and at last crossed over to the piano. The brightly polished keys attracted him, and seating himself before them he began to play; he played extempore variations on some of his more favourite themes, not regarding his hands, his head backward tilted a trifle, a half-formed smile parting his lips, in an ease and content of being so rare to his experience that he seemed almost in the happy power of a drug. As he sat before the piano Laura returned to the room; she came in softly and stood near him, but for a time he was not aware of her. Then suddenly he knew that she was there; his hands dropped from the keys, he turned and found her smiling down at him.

"I disturbed you at your orisons!" she said.

"Not so serious as that—but at a good piano, anyway. Do you play it?"

"Not for you to hear! Shall we go now? Shall we go out a while?"

He stood up and they walked toward the door together.

"Do you know what I want to do this afternoon?" she asked. "Not go anywhere, especially, but just walk a little while in the crowds. Do you mind?"

"No, indeed!"

All her desires found him complacent. Their environment seemed a trivial concern to him; he drew his content from his nearness to her, the quality of her being that made its appeal to him in the manner of a caress, that he could feel anywhere, alone with her or in crowds.

They passed out into the corridor, Braun helped her to step into the elevator, and she took his arm when they walked from the cage into the lobby. In a moment they were outdoors in the street. It was a transparent autumn day, brilliant with sunlight; Braun breathed in fully, seeming to withdraw a buoyance from the keen, clear air.

"It's good to be with you," said Laura. "And do you think I've been

too flippant this afternoon? Forgive me for that! I was only happy to have you come!"

Her glowing face was turned to the side to his, and the fluctuant colour of her cheeks seemed the reflected glow of an inner flame, rising and falling. He met her eyes with his own, revealing an expression of reproach.

"Do you want me to forgive you for making me content?"

She did not answer him; she gave him her thanks in an illuminating smile. For a time they walked along without speaking, and curiously enough feeling the sense of complete intimacy that makes such silent moments not an embarrassment, but a communion. The streets were crowded and clamorous; in the sunlight they had a holiday manner. Laura watched the faces of all they passed. The motives and purposes of the crowd seemed fully revealed to her to-day; there remained only the mystery of an occasional threatening face, threading through the others like a sinister drift piece afloat inscrutably in a clear stream. But if the aims of the crowd to-day appeared paltry and inconsequent, she none the less found a pleasure in being there; the quality to fascinate her was the combined impress upon her of the many lives, the assurance of vitality, to which her own exuberant zest of living responded. She turned now to look at the composer; he was walking with his head thrown back a little, his eyes straight in front, as if he saw something that engrossed him on the line of a distant horizon, over the heads of all the people. She spoke to him.

"Does any of this ever go into your music?"

He turned to her at once, questioning.

"Into my music? What?"

"I mean, do you try to paint a picture, ever? Streets, men and women, clatter and bang?"

"No. So far as I'm concerned that can't be done with music. I suppose, with sufficient cleverness, one might get the effect of a Klaxon horn out of the orchestra, and the strings could give a wail like a crying child, or the tympani could imitate hoof-beats. But if these effects have anything to do with a piece of orchestral music I can't see but what a real Klaxon, and a genuine baby to be pinched at the proper second wouldn't have a considerable advantage of reality."

He laughed a little and she laughed with him.

"Music to me," he said, "is no more than organized sound to which I feel a certain response. It may perhaps express a mood in so far as I am more responsive to certain sounds in certain moods. In that fashion the life of a man who writes music may vaguely be shadowed out in his compositions; that is, his way of living would give him certain predominant moods. I've never thought much about that—perhaps it's even more negligible than it seems. In approaching art, one goes into a different life. Last night I told you that so far as I conceived it, music was essentially unreal. In its best form it is not concerned with the corporate world."

He extended his hand and made with it an inclusive gesture.

"So far as I know," he said, "these people, a crowd like this, have never had any effect upon my compositions. No authentic effect, no interpretative effect anyway. I don't know anything about these people; I don't understand them."

As he spoke she watched his face, the remote expression of his eyes, the almost scornful curve of his moving lips. He was, manifestly, immensely separated and aloof; his disjunction from the usual current of living stirred her; she drew a little closer to him. He seemed now more forcibly a personality for her own exploiting, in that others had so little share in him.

At last, at her suggestion, they turned back, and silent again they came once more to her apartment. When they were in the rooms again, and she had dropped on a convenient chair the bright little coat she had been wearing, her loquacity returned to her like a sudden cascade.

"See, it's getting dark," she said. "It's time we cooked supper. What shall we have? Shall I manufacture you a patent dish of my own?"

"Will it be safe?"

"Ah! You mistrust me, don't you? Didn't I tell you I love to cook? I can, too; you'll see!"

She took his arm and drew him with her through the dining-room, into the little kitchen. She turned on the light and opened the door of the ice-box, stooping to her inspection.

"I'll make you some of my special stuffed peppers," she said.

She tied an apron about her and carried dishes to the kitchen table. She insisted that he must help her and made him take off his coat. She gave him large green peppers; demonstrated the method of cutting off the tops, gouging out the seeds. He watched her shred up veal very fine and drop it in a pan of hot butter, whilst the peppers were boiling in salted water. He predicted that the peppers would collapse and shrivel up; she laughed at him when he was proven wrong. With a large cake of cheese in his hand, she showed him how to run it over a grater until it had crumbled almost to a powder. He saw her mix the cheese with tomatoes, for a sauce, and she made him privy to the secrets of seasoning it with red pepper, curry, allspice, paprika. The smells of cooking moved through the kitchen like an extraordinary aroma. As the girl pushed the pans about on the stove the heat flushed her cheeks warmly; Braun moved rapidly aside, from place to place, to keep out of her way; his amusement was very great.

When they sat down at the table she produced a bottle of wine and they drank to each other a dozen times. As many times the incredible fact that he had met her only the night before stood out in Braun's mind; it seemed untrue and impossible; he refused to consider it. But at the same time he understood that he did not fully know her, had with no adequacy plumbed her possibilities; they were, indeed, only on the threshold. This new experience of a wholly absorbing human being gave him almost a new life; he lived again. At a certain point his drab and disappointing life had stopped, as if from a death, a quick, keen death like that of a sword thrust, and in an instant, remembering the only existence only, he was in the new, pagan, glamorous, chromatic. He looked at his companion as opposite him she gave him her smile like a queen her gifts. He knew that the days that had been were indubitably gone, dissolved and passed like risen mists, and that his to-morrows would take their colour, their flavour, their glamour from her figure, moving luminously through them.

VIII

When they finished their supper she asked him to play for her. They walked out of the dining-room together, and he took his place before the piano. She did not light the lights; a diffused glow came into the room from the streets like the vague flush of a yellow and unreal dawn; he began to play.

He played quietly and she stood near him, a little behind him; as he swayed back his head almost touched her breast. Again he played improvisations on themes that were dear to him and the curious music made the only sound that stirred in the room. It moved and vibrated in the dusk almost like a living spirit; the man from whose hands it was created, and the woman who listened were subordinate to its immediate mastery. He stopped playing; the sound in the room was gone; he turned around slowly and found her very close to him.

Her face above him was a dim whiteness, indistinct, pallid, lovely. The pile of her black hair was a shadow above it. She was motionless, taller it seemed, slender, shadowy. The silence of the room was filled with the potentiality of speech, as if voices would somewhere begin to talk in it, saying words caressing and sweet. The dimness was a mystery, the woman close to him was yet immensely separated, for somehow he lacked the power to lift up his hand

and let it touch her. She had then the immateriality of a ghost, tantalizing and remote.

His mood changed; she was again real. He saw her hand at the side of her dress like a white flower suspended in the air; he raised his own and touched it. Her fingers closed over his hand; a warmth from the pressure suffused through his veins and bounded in his pulses. In a moment she had come out of the dusk, out of the dim standing in front of him, to the intimacy of the bench beside him. Her arms circled his neck in a charmed ring; his hands were on her white cheeks, the ends of his fingers thrust up into the edges of her jetty hair. He drew her face to his own and kissed her.

He kissed her lips and her cheeks, the white column of her neck and her closed eyes; he took her two hands and pressed his lips to them. Then, his head inclined a little backward, he began to laugh, and the sound was resonated from the walls of the room to a choir of swift cachination.

"Have I caught it?" he exclaimed. "Romantic love! Am I going to go through all the symptoms, all the foolishness, the fluff and flummery, sweetheart? You've made me young again!"

She was laughing with him now; the overtones of her laugh were resonated with his own.

"Does it terrify you, dear?" she asked. "Does it make you very much afraid?"

"Yes, what special kind of a fool will you make me? I've still a little shame left; you'll take that from me presently. And I was content to be your musician!"

"Aren't you glad?"

"Oh, damn it . . . yes, I'm glad!"

He kissed her again; she broke out of his embrace and bounded to her feet; she ran behind him and rumpled up his hair with her quick fingers.

"This is only the beginning, my Master!" she cried, her voice like an echo.

He wheeled about to the piano, and pressing down the pedal loosed a cacophony of dissonant chords, progressing from bass to treble; intervals of seconds, sevenths, ninths, empty chords of the tonic, fifth and octave, without a mode determining third. The clamour was sudden and immense; it continued until Laura bent over him, drew back his head, and he forgot to play in kissing her.

She was greatly delighted and her enthusiasm gave her eyes a lustrous fulness and burned in spots of red on her cheeks. She had made, she knew, a fabulous capture; she had immeshed a genius in her charm. Her pride was revealed in the tenderness of her caresses, the lingering touch of her fingers on his hand, the breath quickly drawn in and expelled. No barrier, no obstruction, no restraint appeared in her vision to limit him from her possession. And her abounding spirits made the moment adequate to her; she had no need to dream.

For him the years seemed to have dropped off his shoulders like a released burden. Again and again he had the conviction of a rejuvenescence that made of his blood a fresh fluid, heady and swift, beating a new pulse. He suddenly saw his sophistication false, and his philosophies wrong. Life, that he had believed implacable and malevolent, had dropped its mask of harshness, revealing lineaments gracious and glittering. He saw himself the object of a miracle; his sense of wonder was evoked like a dim and fragrant flower.

Going home that night, he had reached the house and was inside the door before he thought of his wife, Mary. His wife! . . . the name seemed an anachronism, something out of the distraught days of a past incarnation, and the woman herself—an impossibility! He shrugged his shoulders; he laughed; he refused to believe in her. He went to bed incredulous of her nearness.

IX

During the day alone Mary had had the moments in which to further her dreams. She had known a day of caressing content; to dream was a nearly

forgotten happiness. Her visions were a luxury almost voluptuous; she indulged them like a pagan. It seemed to her there was a luminous word, like the open-sesame of necromancy, a magic few syllables that could evoke the moments that had been and long discarded gallantries; a word that she could speak to him to illumine and reclaim his memories. Perhaps she could say it the next day; perhaps the day no later than the one that followed. She went to bed at last and fell into a calm sleep.

But it appeared impossible to get the quiet moment alone with him. A month before, and that would have been easy. Night after night she had sat in the same room with him, whilst he laboriously wrote down his music. But something engrossed him now. He was seldom at home. He came back late at night, sometimes only a few hours before the dawn, after she had gone to bed, tired with waiting for him past a reasonable hour. Each day he hurried away, sometimes very soon after breakfast. She thought at first that business arrangements kept him so occupied.

But finally that scarcely seemed credible. Moreover, watching his face in the few moments she had with him she could never fail to find an elation there. He seemed unaware that she waited upon him and served him; he was like a fourth dimensional being, removed, remote. He scarcely spoke a sentence to her; he never deluged her with his old abuse; he ignored her. He went about with this light in his countenance, this lifted head, set with glowing eyes. At first she was glad to see him so, for she thought him happy through his emancipation; then, finally, his face troubled her.

The exultation he betrayed grew inimical to her cherished hopes. She did not comprehend the reason, yet more and more it seemed an enthusiasm in him that opposed her, that implacably stood betwixt him and her precious dreams, an antagonist, a barrier. When she found him sitting at the table, looking across the room as if through miraculously transparent walls a vista to him alone visible was revealed, her reaction was that of an inevitable depression. Unfathomably something opposed itself to debase her hopes, something obtruded into her desires like a shadow.

For more than a month she waited on an opportunity that seemed to grow not nearer but the more remote. Now her calm and content were with her no longer; she was deeply troubled. She groped as in an utter dark to discover whatever might be her antagonist; almost as a corporate thing she could feel its presence, hear the breathing of it, but touch it with her eager hands and learn its quality, never.

X

One morning, after Paul had eaten his silent breakfast, he went into the room he used as a work place. She could hear him moving about there, she could hear the creak of his chair as he dropped into it from time to time; she wondered if he were writing again. At last, as if from an inspiration, she felt that she could now talk to him. She did not know what it was she intended to say: the word was not on her lips. But she went quietly through the hall, opened the door of his room and stepped in softly.

He was sitting at his table, but he was not composing. It seemed that his heaps of manuscripts were untouched; they were piled up neatly as she had placed them, weighted down by a picturesque little revolver, whose nacre handle, touched by a finger of sunlight, gleamed like a huge ruby. He sat at the table with his head turned to the window, his lips parted, his profile pale and enthused. Like a stab of a sharp blade, the sight of his exalted face sent a throbbing pain to her heart. He did not turn at her entrance; he showed no sign of her presence.

"Paul!" she exclaimed.

Still he was immobile; his face was only half revealed to her.

"Paul!" she cried again. "What is it?"

He turned now and looked at her, although the light in his eyes was so remote she doubted that he saw her.

She put out her hands a little, and the restraint of her gesture made it one of indefinite appeal.

"I've watched you!" she cried. "I've seen that you're happy! I want to share your happiness with you, Paul. Your face looks like it did when we first knew each other . . . do you remember? You look years and years younger! You look like you did years ago; do you remember, Paul? If you're happy, let me be happy with you!"

She never knew that this would be so hard to say, that it would wrench her so, like the clutch of rude hands crushing something of her being immensely keen to hurt, inordinately sensitive.

He listened to her as she spoke; he stared at her when she had finished, and for a dozen slow seconds no change came in his face. Then she heard an incredible sound: it beat upon her ears malignly, dreadfully, horribly; for an instant she was incredulous of it as of something monstrous and fabulous, as of something unreal and impossible: he was laughing! He was looking at her and laughing, she could see the cachinnous rise and fall of his shoulders, the convulsive movements of his breast. For a moment she regarded his appalling mirth, then, as one possessed of a sheer and overwhelming fear, a pure, pulsing terror, as one fleeing from the vision of something monstrous and unspeakable, she flung open the door and ran from the room. She ran to the other end of the flat, back to the kitchen, and there, her hands clutched at the edges of her dress, her eyes opened widely, she listened, afraid that those sounds had come with her, like pursuing wraiths.

For many moments she stood motionless, seeming not to breathe. Then an immense and sudden weariness possessed her, as if the accumulated travail of all her life had come upon her with an instant exhaustion. She sat down quickly in a chair, her arms dropped across her lap, her head drooped like a wilted flower. She was as motionless as something carven, as a being spelled to immobility by an inimical magic.

She had few thoughts at this time; her mind was as if sponged clean in an erasure depriving her of all hope, all memories, even all pain. Her sense was that of having come out of a tempestuous conflict, defeated, borne down by forces immeasurably too great for her opposing strength, by forces whose very nature and quality she could not fathom, yet left somehow still alive.

She was aroused at last by the sound of Braun's footsteps moving about in the hall. A moment later she heard the door of the outer corridor close: he had gone. In an instant she stood up. Somehow it seemed that he could not go this time unregarded; she felt, as by an urge against which there was no possibility of denial, that she must know where he went, what it was he secretly found to illumine his face and remove him from her with a finality that appeared in this moment as utter as death. She ran into her room and found a hat and coat; a moment later she was outdoors, and ahead of her she saw the composer, walking rapidly, with a manifest buoyance.

XI

She followed him along all the streets through which he passed. He never turned around; he seemed too eager for his goal for that; she would have been undiscovered had she trailed only a step behind his heels. She saw him stop at last before an apartment house, and as he was about to go in she observed a woman come out to him.

In an instant she understood, and all that had been cloaked in a concealing mist was now clear as by a white and merciless light. She walked forward a few more paces; she was close enough now to see the face of the girl whom he greeted.

The quality of that face brought back to her the immense weariness, the utter

enervation, she had known an hour before. It was young and beautiful and the exuberance of youth glowed there like a thing beyond harm and defeat. The charm of this girl seemed to arm her magnificently, like an investiture of shining steel; in her appalling youngness she could never be daunted, nothing could assail her; she possessed that which for Mary was unrecoverable, lost somewhere and dishonoured in the dust of irrevocable years.

Mary turned and walked back the way she had come; there was no turmoil in her spirits, but rather a waiting calm, resultant of her sense of utter vanquishment. But as she drew near a certain terror of going in came to her; she passed by until she came to a public square. Here she found a bench and sat down.

A tree thrust out its branches above her; black and nearly denuded, they seemed the gnarled arms of some antique monster. The shouts of children, shrill and high, made the air constantly palpitant; she did not hear them. A man walked past her slowly, looking at her, a baby in a passing coach reached ineffectual arms out to her; she did not see them. She must have remained almost without thought in her mind for several hours; the sun was red and low as she stood up. She walked slowly through the square, and the fallen leaves, dried out and brilliant, crackled like cold snow under her tread. A child in a headlong rush collided with her; she paused mechanically until the small scrambling organism disengaged itself from her skirts. This time she went home.

The rooms were silent when she entered; at once she perceived a certain disorder in them. It puzzled her at first; things were surely not as she had left them. She went into the bedroom and saw that the bureau drawers had been pulled out and over the chairs and bed was a litter of clothing. This was incomprehensible and she stood by the bed, lifted a necktie from the cover, dropped it back again, and looked around the room as if she expected to find the author of this turmoil concealed somewhere about the four walls. But no one was there; in the cubic smallness of the chamber she was alone, and the only sound that reached her ears was the sibilant noise of her own breathing.

She went out of the bedroom, seeking disclosures in other rooms. She came to the composer's study and walked in. She stopped at the door and stared at the big table at which, for years, she had seen him work. The table was startlingly strange and for a second she gazed at it uncomprehendingly; then, like an instant divination, she perceived that its nudity astonished her, the table was bare, the heaps of manuscript were gone. Only a couple of discarded papers lay on the bare top and she walked over and fingered them.

One was a written sheet, and as she crumpled it between her fingers it startled her to see, suddenly, that this was a letter addressed to her. She read it, and somehow it did not surprise her; no other expectation had been in her mind. Paul had come back while she was gone and when he had not found her he had written to her. He must have taken a suitcase full of things away with him; now he was gone.

It seemed impossible for her to leave the table. She dropped his careless note, the note that seemed to dismiss her like the casual good-bye of friends at parting, and picked up the other papers he had left behind him. They were sheets of manuscript, blank pages of ruled paper, soiled scraps with notes upon them. She found herself looking at one of them, a song he must have begun not many days before and then abandoned. Only a few measures were written. She saw a dedication at the top of it. She read the name: Laura Dunlap.

She understood at once; her surety was without question. Laura Dunlap! Laura Dunlap! She repeated the name, saying it aloud and hearing the echo of it in the empty room. Laura Dunlap! This was the one; this was her name! But there seemed no witchery in the

name . . . it did not suggest an allure . . .

She found herself slipping from the table; she dropped down to the floor; crumpled there, she began to sob. The tears smarted her eyes and she felt them drop on her hands. And somehow they brought a return of her courage, or a desperation with the effect of courage. She stood up and searched in her dress for her handkerchief.

Laura Dunlap . . . after all, this was only a girl who perhaps did not know that Paul had a wife. She was young, but a human being. What had happened was impossible; it must not be permitted a possibility. Her breath came faster, she ran out of the room swiftly. She hurried to the bathroom and bathed her hot eyes with cold water. She ran her fingers deftly along her hair, tucking up the escaped strands that touched her moist cheeks like wilted spears of grass. Constantly it comforted her to think that Laura Dunlap, young it was true, was a human being: she must know something of compassion, something of pity, even something of despair!

She hurried from the house and walked over the streets through which she had come earlier that day. Braun was not in front of her now and it seemed to her that she alone occupied all the long thoroughfare, that all other living things had gone out of life, abandoning her to the terror of herself, the terror of no companionship, no human intercourse, the terror of great possible winds coming out of the illimitable skies, of spaces endless and without goals, of distances remote and incalculable. Men and women passed her, brushed against her in passing, and she was unaware of them. She hurried faster, holding one hand clenched against her breast.

She found the apartment house and went up the steps. A boy was at the elevator.

"Take me up to Miss Dunlap's apartment," she said. "You needn't call her; I'm expected."

The boy hesitated a moment, and then permitted her to enter the cage. In a moment he had stopped and she stepped out on an upper floor. There were several doors in the corridor; she presently found the name-plate she sought. She did not ring, but tried the knob and the door responded to her push. As it opened, the playing of a piano, boisterous and loud, smote her ears in a rush of sound and seemed to push her back an instant, like the thrust of sudden hands.

She was in a little inner hall and she hurried through it to the room from which issued the music. She passed through another door; she was within a large room lit now, in the twilight, by a hanging dome; the two were there, Braun and the girl.

XII

THE girl was standing behind him whilst he played upon the piano in abandoned enthusiasm. It was she who perceived Mary's entrance. She uttered a little cry and clutched the shoulders of the performer. Braun stopped instantly and wheeled about on the stool. He stared at his wife.

He was off the stool and upon his feet.

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "What do you want?"

She was just within the door and the light gilded her lifted face, throwing small shadows into the wrinkles about her eyes, the small lines drooping from her mouth, revealing hollows in her cheeks. She found no word to speak; she looked at Braun; she looked at the girl that stood behind him.

The girl was standing motionless, engauded by the yellow light, bright, fluctuant carmine glowing on her cheeks, a faint line of nacreous teeth visible between the cleft of her parted, full lips. Mary no longer looked at the composer, but only at her antagonist. The pleading she had come to do seemed now the outre purpose of a nightmare. Once more, more intimately than before, the abounding youth of this woman was made manifest to her in a dreadful

comprehension, her unconquerable and undefeatable youth, her youth so exuberant that it flowed out of herself like a golden stream and gave its quality to the man beside her, making him also young. The years she had lived seemed each of them a palpable weight, chaining her to the spot upon which she stood, fixing her to that place forever, making supremely impossible the step that would carry her between them.

Then at the very climax of her despair a sardonic comfort came into her mind. The years would take her great possession from this girl, too, the unregarding years would steal it from her. And suddenly she was furious with an immense impatience—years! Now, at once, something must seize it from her on the instant! With a blind fury of desire, with a feral urge to accomplish in a moment of time that which would be done too slowly by the heavy-footed years, she seethed with a tigerish impulse to run at this gilded girl and rip the youth and loveliness from her face, as if it were a garment to be snatched away. For an instant she was poised forward, her hands pushed out a little, like a cat set for a spring. Her lips and tongue were dry; she could not speak.

And then her arms dropped down flexed, relaxed; her despair returned to her like an overmastering wave, thrown back only once from a crumbling rock. Again she was inundated with the salt and bitter knowledge of her own futility, her helplessness, her implacable defeat. Again she saw Braun and the girl standing close to each other in their unassailable zest and assurance. And suddenly her eyes would not bear this picture any longer, she closed them a second, she turned her head, she found herself running from the room. Someone called after her; she did not distinguish the words that were spoken.

She reached the outer corridor and mechanically summoned the elevator to take her below. She fled from the building in a panic fear, as if from something monstrous and intolerable. For a square or two she ran along the alien streets like one pursued.

XIII

Now the stress of her emotions lifted; her nerves flexed in an instant, like taut, resilient bands, released. She walked slowly, looking about her a little wonderingly as the crowds passed about her and the sounds of human voices came into her ears. She was immensely apathetic, and all the living stir through which she moved gave to her mind no sense and no significance. She was as if detached, of another substance, no longer the sharer in universal emotions, knowing neither the hope of pleasure nor the immediacy of pain. She came to the place where she lived and noiselessly went indoors.

Once more she was in the familiar rooms, but they had no meaning to her now, their import was vanished like an extinguished light. She walked through them, looking into each one, finding nothing. She stopped at her bedroom, went in, closed the door. Her unregarding feet moved through the litter that encumbered the carpet. She looked at the disordered bed; she was overwhelmingly tired; she knew that she must rest. A window was partly open and she closed it. Standing on her toes, stretching up her arms painfully to reach, she turned the cock of the gas-jet full around. Then she lay down on the bed, her face in the pillow. The room was soundless save for the soft hiss of escaping gas, like the sibilant noise of a spray of water falling on heated iron.

She was undiscovered until the odour of gas, passing out into the hall, became apparent in the flat above. It was traced to its source and a distracted janitor came upon the lifeless woman as she lay in her bed, her face turned in to the pillow, her hands flung out limply. A doctor arrived and said there was nothing to do. The rooms filled with a futile crowd of staring people, investigating, touching things, handling. Several reporters appeared and took

notes; a little stream of expectant men and women trickled in and out of the bedroom; in the hall groups of married women, tenants of the house, collected and talked in low, eager voices, passing from the theme of the dead woman to the exchange of obstetrical confidences.

XIV

It took a day to locate Braun, but he came at last, surprised and exasperated. He stared at the woman who had been his wife, but his emotions were unmoved. She was something immensely remote, whom he had long ceased to find consequent. No reminiscence from the departed years returned to illumine her act and make it comprehensible to him; he did not understand her death. He had a vague notion that it might have been accidental; that seemed in consonance with his ineffectual memory of her. It required three days to see the business to its conclusion, and then he returned to Laura.

She received him with a gentle gravity, whilst her fingers closed about his hand. His accumulated irritations and anger passed from his spirit like a sickness exorcised by a miraculous cure. The warmth of her intimacy, the glow of her nearness, suffused itself through all his senses. He stroked the dark masses of her hair, he drew down her face and felt the soft texture of her cheeks against his own, he kissed her lips. He forgot the travail of his other days; his memories did not reach beyond the moment when he had first seen her. He could never have enough of touching her; she responded to all his caresses.

"How long have I been gone?" he asked. "But it doesn't matter—it seemed an abominable eternity, a damned, endless stretch of time. I was about to break lose. I shall never be away from you again."

They were seated together on a little couch, bright with a flowered cretonne cover. She drew closer to him; she looked up into his face, bent over her own. She watched his lips as he spoke to her and believed, with a splendid and abounding faith, the assurances that were shaped there, that stirred the air with intimate words, that entered into her ears like palpable caresses.

"And now we can be married!" she exclaimed, softly.

He drew back from her a little, stared a moment, and then broke into a resounding laugh.

"Great God!" he cried. "I can't see what's under my nose! Certainly! I never realized it was possible. I never thought of it!"

He stood up, lifted her with him, held her close.

"I want you for my wife," he said. "When will you marry me?"

"As soon as you say, dear," she murmured.

"Then it needn't be any later than to-morrow," he said.

His precipitancy delighted her and she laughed aloud in a joyous tinkle of sound. She took him to the piano and made him play for her, but he would not play as she wished, not the languorous themes her mood desired, but fingered boisterous chords and great robust runs until the measure of the little room seemed insufficient for the rhythmic surge in the air. Yet after a moment she caught the clamorous spirit of his exultation; it entered into her blood like the esence of antique romance, the glamour of riding men and jousting knights, the glitter of crossing swords in the sunlight, the towered walls of moted castles, the chromatic costumery of departed ages. Her cheeks flamed red, her eyes dilated, her lips parted with expectancy. She bent over the player a moment and then, circling him with her arms, she pulled him back against her breast and pressed her kisses on his lips.

XV

They were married as he proposed, and they went away to the mountains and spent a month in glowing intimacy. They lived in a squat little bungalow

hastily rented, where Laura cooked for him and tended upon him with a fine delight. In the evening they sat together on a porch looking down into the dusk slope of a tangled valley. For the first weeks the moon lit this with a phosphorescent pallor, and a great symphony of singing crickets rose up from the briers and grass in endless night-song. The pine woods, scented and aromatic, were close about them and in the darkness the whinnying cries of remote screech-owls came through the night with a touch of melancholy that made them draw closer and smile at each other with assurance.

In the last week they undertook an expedition that kept them away the whole day. They pushed through overgrown paths, came nearly to disaster with concealed hornets' nests, disturbed the lairs of emerald green snakes that glided out and away in noiseless flight, and late in the afternoon reached the top of the highest mountain. They sat down there with a universe of green ridges and brown slopes of scrub oak spread out beneath them like waves of an immobile sea.

"I could write music in a place like this," said Braun.

Then he knew that he wanted to write; he had composed nothing for months. For an instant, in the sudden urge of the moment, he looked about impatiently, as if he expected to find the ruled paper, the materials of composition, there at his hand. But a few minutes later he forgot his desire in the pleasure of their memorable descent from the mountain.

They found a path that turned downward in a great spiral and arm in arm they descended with a long, impetuous stride. They passed a boy carrying a supper pail to some berry-picker near the top and he stopped and stared after them. The crisp night air was blowing in, and it tingled on their faces like a salt spray. Halfway up the adjacent mountain, across an intervening valley that now was dusk and blanketed in grey and purple mists, they saw the lights of a hotel twinkle into being, one by one, like beacons set in the window of a castle. It was dark when they got to the lower road; they were tired and hungry when they reached their house.

But Braun knew he must go back to the city and write, and Laura acquiesced in his desire. She spoke eloquently of the new symphony he would compose, but he was already inventing the materials of it in his mind and her vague enthusiasms, her meaningless arabesques, annoyed him a little.

Several days later they returned to the city, arriving in the early afternoon. Paul had been silent during the ride in the train, preoccupied with his inspiration. He planned a tone poem, to be composed as a continuous narrative. The thematic material was assembling before his eyes and some of it was ready to commit to paper; he planned something full-voiced, with the initial theme delivered clamorously from the horns, a quick announcement of a second and a third theme, and then a grandly executed contrapuntal treatment that would bring into action all the orchestral resources. As soon as they were indoors he sat down at his table and began to work.

The afternoon passed and he was unaware that so many hours had gone over. The room became dusk; he was suddenly conscious of the dimming light. He stood up and walked across the floor to the button switch on the wall; he pressed it and the chamber was illuminated. He turned to go back to his work when Laura entered and stood just inside the door.

She had a big apron tied around her dress; she was deep in the business of preparing his supper. She looked at him, smiling, her head bent backward just a little, the line of her throat touched to an aurine softness by the light overhead, her lips faintly pouted and inviting his kiss. He met her eyes, staring at her a second, vaguely. For a few moments he scarcely saw her.

Then his faculties were released from the spell of his work and he was conscious of her.

"Don't you want to come out and help me, dear?" she asked.

He did not reply at once; something in her aspect puzzled him. There was a lack, a deficiency, a lost quality. He could not understand; he still stared at her.

She crossed the room and put her arms about him; she kissed him.

"Don't look at me so far away!" she exclaimed. "It makes me feel as if I weren't in your world!"

He drew back from her embrace, astonished but comprehending. Her kiss had lacked its old flavour; something of the lustre had departed from the jetty masses of her hair; an indefinable air of springtime had gone out of her being. It seemed to him the period he had known her had left a faint but perceptible impress upon her face and the contours of her person, the face and body that had seemed superior to time. For the first time he understood that passing days, one following another and reaching out into years, might mark and change her.

"Aren't you coming with me?" she asked again.

Her forehead was faintly wrinkled; she searched his eyes with a troubled scrutiny.

And then she seized him tightly with her imprisoning arms, she pressed her kisses upon him, she breathed with his breathing. The thrill of the old delight came up in him again; he returned her kisses; he found her lovely.

XVI

In six years he composed two tone poems, two symphonies, and half a dozen exquisitely proportioned songs. He was now engaged upon a work that he knew would be his greatest, the supreme effort, the ultimate maturity of all his powers, all his cunning, all his high sense of the beautiful. He sat in the night, writing down the measures of this music with a slender pencil, whittled to a long, sharp point. Now and again, snorting a little, he made an erasure. For a time the material flowed out upon the paper with at least a certain ease. Then the erasures became more common, each new measure took for its writing down a longer period of time. He struggled for a while, he clutched at his elusive facility, but stood up at last, angry and exasperated. Across the room he saw his wife, looking at him.

"Why the devil, don't you do something!" he exclaimed. "Don't sit there looking at me like a gargoyle!"

She said nothing to him, she looked at him with only the reproach of her dark, dolorous eyes.

Braun flung back his head, threw up his arms, and clenched his extended hands in a passionate, appealing gesture.

"Oh, great heavens!" he cried. "Tell me why I married this woman! Tell me what she has in common with me! Tell me why I continue to live with her!"

He turned savagely to his wife.

"Tell me that!" he bellowed.

But still she said nothing to him; she kept her eyes on his face; a tenderness came into her countenance. In some way, by some means she did not understand, he had strayed from her, and the lyric joy of their early months together had been lost in the unhappy years. But lately she was not so grieved, for she had been recalling, bit by bit, brightness by brightness, the glittering moments of their first hours. It seemed incredible that the quality of these could be gone utterly; that was not possible. She would recall them to him, she would wait for the moment when she could talk to him tenderly, bring back to him reminiscences ineffable and forgotten, touch into being, like fingers on a memory-awakening harp, old melodies of their intimacy that would stir him to desire, that would warm him like a flame.

"You can't tell me!" he cried. "It's preposterous: nobody can tell me!"

He returned to the table and sat down before his work, and began to write. For a little while the thoughts of the woman near him interposed as

a vague trouble between his inspiration and its embodiment on paper. But that passed at last, he forgot her inconsequence, her triviality, her meaninglessness; the impatience was gone from his blood and once more music appeared upon the paper before him in an easy and illuminated stream.

TRUE NORTH

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE was staying in the country and was delighted with the pigs and chickens and home-made pies. She vowed it was the ideal life. One evening she sat on the porch listening to the bull frogs, the crickets and the hired boy making love to her. Gradually the sky was lighted with a yellow glow. Some one's barn was burning in the distance. She became homesick and cried. It reminded her of Broadway.

RIVALS

By Oscar C. Williams

EVEN the great, beautiful, gold-giving sun
Cannot show mercy;
In the dewdrop,
Thrilling in its little dream,
He sees a tiny rival for beauty,
And he takes revenge!

ALL the philosophy of marriage is expressed at a railroad station by the manner in which a husband embraces his wife upon his departure and the manner in which he embraces her upon his return.

A WOMAN is never surprised when a man tells her that he loves her. What surprises her is that he held out so long.

A MAN stops being a child when he marries the first time, and begins again when he marries the second time.

MIRAGE

By Vennette Herron

I

"FIRST of all," claimed the Russian, "she must be beautiful. An ugly woman is an abnormality—a monstrosity—and ought not to be permitted to live. You laugh? But, I ask you, if a creature created for love is unlovable, what further excuse is there for its existence? There you are!" and Stanislas Oberowski made a gesture with one strong, very white hand, which swept the world clean of ill-favoured femininity and left only perfect specimens, garnished and plattered before the eyes of the Epicurean —man.

"Would," his companion wished devoutly, "that some feminist might hear and answer you!"

"Bah! I suppose that since not all are beautiful and since the State will not dispose of them and they lack the courage for suicide, they must fill their time with talk; but the woman who has accomplished greatly is she who has been greatly loved. So it was in the beginning—is now—and ever shall be. It is growing a little late—perhaps I had better send—"

"By no means, interrupted the American. "We are not in haste."

From the curtained alcove, where the two men lounged in comfortably cushioned chairs, with cigarettes and cocktails conveniently placed upon a small table between them, they could look out across the foyer of one of New York's ultra-fashionable hotels and through broad open doors could gaze into one of its rose-hung, flower-scented and softly shaded dining-rooms and could catch, now and again, the lilt of light music sifting through gilded grills and banks of palms. A constant flow of diners passed back and forth, bowing and smiling, shadowed and shifting, against the blurred, pink glow of the dining-room, like vari-coloured petals a-swirl on a sunset stream.

Oberowski sat silent for a moment, his eyes on the kaleidoscopic whirl of pastel and black. He was a big, rather square, handsome man, in the late thirties — white-skinned and black-bearded, according to his type.

At length he readjusted his monocle, leaned forward slightly, in order to get a better view, and went on:

"To be truly beautiful, also, a woman must have infinite finish. Do you realize how few really finished products one can find on this still so crude and naif planet? A symphony—a lyric—a tiger—some wine—some women—and sometimes, at exactly the right consistency, a Camembert cheese. At the moment I can think of no others."

Harold Dudley laughed. He was a plump, blond, pink-skinned, well-tubbed and well-fed American, obviously a member of the best clubs, a good sportsman, albeit a trifle heavy, a bachelor—it goes without saying—and a man-about-town. In fact a very self-possessed and presentable young fellow—one who would appear to advantage in almost any group of men, but one who, in comparison with his present host, seemed, in some indescribable way, to be immature. His manners were excellent, but not distinguished. Before the arrogant perfection of the Russian, his worldliness showed a tinge of self-consciousness, his cynicism seemed a bit forced, and when he lifted the monocle, which dangled by a thin, black thread, against his shining expanse

of shirt, there was just a hint of imitation in the act. One somehow could not imagine Harold Dudley riding into battle, with his glass in his eye

"Your subject," Dudley caught up the conversation, when his mirth had subsided, "is the one eternally interesting. What else do you require in a woman?"

Oberowski continued his category with unabated gravity.

"Above all, she must know how to preserve the glamour of her exquisiteness. She must be as fresh as a flower, but one must never know that she bathes—intensely *soignée*, but one must see naught of the process—the purely artificial toilette, made sometimes for coquetry, after the other is completed, is another thing. She must be immensely intelligent, but her face must never betray it. She must have the carefully cultivated simplicity of a string of matched pearls. Such a woman as I mean is the crowning culmination of the arts of the centuries—but how she is rare! Of course she must not eat."

"Must not eat!" echoed Dudley in amazement. Try as one may, a true æsthete is not made in two generations.

"Mon Dieu, no! She may sip a little wine, if she will—or play with a peach—but literally to eat! To sit down and fill her little mouth with food! *Bifsteck!* Ugh! I should taste it for ever after on her tongue." Oberowski shuddered.

"And having found such a paragon," persisted Dudley, "how long could she be content, do you think?"

"About three months, as a rule. An alliance should never outlast the honeymoon."

"Which precludes marriage. Even the proverbial year of trial would be too long for you."

"A year of marriage would not be a trial, but a tribulation—in most cases, that is—but—you have not yet seen—my wife."

There was an unmistakable note of emotion in Oberowski's pronouncement of the last two words—a frank acknowledgment, not at all inconsistent with his former flippancy. On the contrary, it gave significance and sincerity to all that he had said and served to set Madame Oberowski upon a pinnacle. It was subtle, but genuine, that sudden transition. A connoisseur of sensations and a dealer in emotions, Oberowski did not hesitate to display the last addition to his collection.

"As you know, I am eagerly awaiting the pleasure of my presentation to Madame, your wife."

There was a gleam of amusement in Dudley's eyes, but in the back of his brain, curiosity crouched.

"There are a few rare women," went on Oberowski, caressing the words, as though he rolled an ancient vintage upon his tongue, "who seem to have absorbed all the loveliness of dreams and to radiate it forth again. Natalie has belonged to me for six months—and—" a faint flush crept over his pale, olive cheeks, "she still floats in a mist. We are incurable idealists, we Russians. When we cease to love, it is the very end. Natalie is—well, she is the last of my illusions. In her hands lies the fate of my soul."

Although the features of Oberowski remained impassive, even the lips resting relaxed, Dudley, with his eyes on those of the other man, knew the exact instant that Madame Oberowski appeared in sight, and, even before his host rose, could gauge the crescendo of her approach. It was as though the Russian faced the increasing glow of an oncoming light—but without loss of dignity, or serenity. So interested was Dudley in this phenomenon, that the woman was almost upon them, before he turned his attention to her.

II

SHE was a slender creature of medium height, with close-coiffed, black hair, glossy as a casque of polished jet, magnolia-white skin, and a crimson mouth, like a flower in cream. She wore ivory satin, simple in line, but su-

premely sophisticated in finish, and Dudley was immediately reminded of Oberowski's simile of strung pearls.

Natalie's first words were for her husband.

"I am not late?" she pouted charmingly, in English, but with an accent wholly French.

"You can never be late, *chèrie*, for time stands still in your absence. May I present to you Monsieur Dudley, the good friend, of whom I have so often spoken?"

Natalie extended her hand for Dudley's kiss and left him thrilled by the conventional contact.

"My husband has told me much of your happy days together in my beloved Paris," she said, with a sigh after the name, as though she would add, "When will I again see my home?"

But she immediately continued with vivacious cordiality:

"I am delighted, Monsieur Dudley, that you could come to us to-night. I so much regretted to be ill and unable to receive you before, or to accept your many, so nice invitations. But you have made time pass pleasantly for Stanislas. That was kind. Poor fellow! I was so *triste* and he was so *ennuyé* with me."

"I hope that you have entirely recovered, Madame?"

"Oh, quite—*merci*. It was only *une neuralgie*. Your climate, I think—and then I was so frightened in crossing."

Again a gleam of sadness brushed her face; but she shrugged it away and, laying her hand lightly upon Dudley's arm, turned toward the dining-room.

Throughout the meal Dudley studied his hostess. She engrossed his attention, indeed, to the limit of courtesy. Not only was she one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen, but there was an elusive fragrance of aloofness and spirituality about her, which was the quintessence of art.

Therein, of course, lay its charm. To minds which are not primitive, the song of a bird may sound sweet, but the intricate masterpiece of a musician enthralls. Natalie Oberowski was a sublimated product. Her face was mobile, and yet still—vivacious, and yet impassive. Every possible expression flitted over it, while the features remained composed. She was like a mirror, which reflects everything, while preserving its own smooth surface undisturbed. She made a thousand pretty gestures, which melted one into the other—flowing from one lovely posture to the next, so that the mind of the beholder was forever unable to fix her and was thus kept forever occupied. She was utterly worldly and at the same time ethereal.

As for eating—certainly there was neither awkwardness, nor appearance of toying in her movements. She seemed, indeed, to taste each *plat*, as it was put before her, and sometimes touched her tinted lips to the tip of her champagne glass; but it was impossible to conceive that she fed. She absorbed sustenance, as a flower absorbs dew, and made one feel that it was immediately converted into honey. She remained still cool and sweet, swaying softly in her own ether, long after the diners around about them had grown flushed and fumed with wining. Once she shivered slightly, after an involuntary glance at the next table, where several be-jewelled and be-dizened Jewesses glutted themselves with rich viands; and thereafter she withheld her eyes from straying.

At the first glimpse of her, Dudley envied his friend. At the conclusion of dinner, he hated him. Here was something to which he could never attain. As he had travelled through old civilizations, he had had his eyes opened to one refinement after another in the world-surrounding surge after happiness and pleasure, but here was a dazzling, blinding epitome—the very essence of woman, created for man's enjoyment and glorying in her mission. She was perfection in herself and an apogee in experience. All of his past affairs with women—how they dwindled into insignificance, as he gaped at Natalie! How crude—how almost gross his love-life had been! Even that little Viennese singer, who had

seemed at first so daintily capricious, had wound up by boxing his ears in a public café. Good heavens! How disillusioning they all had been in the end! But this one—ah! Dudley staggered, as he followed in her wake, when they left the dining-room.

They ascended to the small rose and gold salon of the Oberowski's suite for coffee and liqueurs, and there, after making a few entrancing passes of her slender hands among the cups and tiny glasses—magic movements, which left the two men incomprehensibly, but most deftly served—and after puffing daintily twice or thrice at a scented cigarette in a pearl-banded holder, Natalie excused herself and withdrew to her own apartment, where her maid waited to prepare her for going on to the opera. Dudley had to cling to his corner of the table, to prevent himself from being dragged after her in the undertow of her passing.

Oberowski accompanied his wife to the door and then came eagerly back to his guest, his eyes sparkling enquiry and his voice demanding, with the triumph of the successful love-hunter brandishing a trophy, "Is she not all that I have said?"

And Dudley, with his eyes glued to the door, which shut out the sight of the lady, growled an assent. It seemed sacrilege to speak, so steeped was he in the spell of her flower-like fragility.

But Oberowski, frankly enslaved himself, was delighted and flattered by the obvious vanquishment of his friend. Nothing less would have satisfied his vanity. Continual competition kept green the joy of conquering. It gave an extra fillip to the pleasure of possession to torture his friend by talking of his wife, and Oberowski lived for sensation. Also he was as nearly fatuous in his own infatuation as he ever permitted himself to be, and hardly could, if he would, converse of aught but Natalie, while lingering within the perfume of her presence.

Therefore he went on:

"Is she not the loveliest creature you ever saw? Positively I am amazed and almost afraid of my own constancy. It is too great a risk—such an overwhelming experience. If the price should be commensurate! Ah well! I yielded slowly, but I confess that, in spite of myself, my abandonment is almost absolute. Disenchantment now would be too terrible!"

He paused a moment and then gave himself up to gloating.

"But there seems to be neither flaw, nor finis, to her variety. She is full of fancies—deals out a thousand caprices and delicious coquetries. It has been her whim for several nights past, to have me await her down-stairs some time before dining, so that, after an interval of anticipation, she may descend to me, and may thus seem, each time, to be conferring a fresh favour. It is her gift to make a pretty game of life and love."

The chamber door, being insecurely latched, swung open of its own accord, an instant before Natalie reappeared and both men overheard the final directions of mistress to maid, spoken in a voice of silver sweetness.

"But you must speak the English, stupid Josephine. How else can you make him understand? Do not make such a mistake again, unless you wish me to die. There, child, you need not weep. For to-night, it is nothing. Be sure that everything is put away—and here—give him this. Ah!"

There was a sudden break in the voice, as Natalie became aware that the door was ajar and then it continued smoothly:

"I shall not want you again before one. You may amuse yourself until then, as you will."

The sound of the voice absorbed Dudley at the time, but the words seeped into his brain and dripped back into his consciousness, during a crisis, long after, when he would gladly have forgotten them.

Natalie, wrapped in a cloak of white velvet and ermine, with wide drooping sleeves, looked like an angel with folded wings—an angel with a past, and with future possibilities, but content

for the present, with her shining state.

After the opera, they drove to Delmonico's for supper, and there, for the further bewitchment of her companions, Natalie consumed a whole hour in eating one perfect strawberry—making of it the most daintily tantalizing and completely maddening process Dudley had ever beheld. That evening was an education for the American.

III

SEVERAL weeks slipped by, during which Dudley saw Natalie almost every day and became daily more enamoured. It was easy enough to make opportunities to see her, for he and Stanislas had been uncommonly congenial a few years back and Natalie herself encouraged a renewal of the old friendship with all possible cordiality. Indeed, although there was no touch of the personal—in spite of his utmost efforts—in her bearing toward Dudley, and although she evaded intimacy by refusing to receive him when alone, still, she seemed almost to seek sight of him, so promptly did she accept all of his suggestions for their triangular excursioning, and so frequently was she herself the first to say, with a pretty air of seconding her husband's unspoken wish:

"And you will dine with us to-night, Monsieur Dudley, will you not? Stanislas and I feel so fortunate to have found a friend here in this strange New York."

And always, upon these occasions, she sent the two men down before her, and after keeping them waiting for half an hour or so, made a little ceremony of descending to join them. She kept their imaginations intrigued by innumerable little mysteries and made the most natural movements of every-day life appear miraculous by her manner of gracious condescension. She lived by superlatively artful subterfuge, as though the sun should wisper, "I will rise and set for you," and then should go on rising and setting at his habitual hours.

During these evenings together, Dudley was repeatedly reminded of Oberowski's requirements of a woman, so accurately did Natalie meet each one of them and each time he was amazed afresh at her advance over his own original conception of æstheticism. He understood now why Oberowski had said that a pretty woman should not eat. In this delectable delicacy of decadence lay the acme of appeal and allure, as supreme above prudish perfection as cavair is superior to cabbage.

All of their intervals of waiting for the mistress of their thoughts, the two men occupied with talk of her; and from a stress of extreme envy. Dudley eventually settled into a state of kinship with the Russian. He began to feel that they were banded together for the greater glory and protection of Natalie. Two satellites, swimming in star-dust—to both of them the desire for possession was secondary to the inner urge to keep her ideality intact. But her intrinsic charm was equal to her illusory—she never failed them, and their allegiance grew more and more abject. By being all that they were not, while disapproving of nothing that they were, she subdued them, and the two world-weary, wholly sophisticated men—head-subtle and heart-simple, as men usually are—steeped themselves in her sublimity, like two bedraggled cats drying their fur in the sun.

One evening, some months after the commencement of this strange, and, in a stimulating fashion, strained relationship between them, Oberowski and Dudley sat together over their cocktails and cigarettes, awaiting, as usual, the advent of Natalie. They spoke now and again somewhat desultorily, being both abstracted by anticipation, until, by chance, the talk drifted into a discussion of jewels, after which, having both something of a passion for such things, they became more animated.

"I have an emerald upstairs," Oberowski volunteered, at length, "which I believe you would enjoy regarding. It belonged originally to—" he lowered his tone to mention a name almost

ostentatiously royal, and then went on:

"Owing to peculiar conditions brought about by the war, he parted with it not long ago and I bought it of a dealer in Paris, just before coming over. If you will excuse me one moment, I will bring it down. We are unobserved in here."

Suave, self-possessed and smiling, Oberowski left the room. He returned, after an absence of perhaps ten minutes, with his expression unchanged, but with the difference that his features seemed fixed thus in rigidity. His hands were empty and trembled, as he held back the curtains.

Dudley was eager to see the treasure and rose hastily upon the entrance of his host, but started back at sight of his face.

"The jewel—it is not—good God!—is anything wrong?" he exclaimed, startled out of his carefully acquired casualness of manner.

"No, no," Oberowski brushed aside his alarm. "It is safe, but—I beg your pardon—I forgot to bring it down. Something has occurred to make me a little *distraite*. It is no matter. We will look at it another time."

He resumed his seat and, with superb self-control, carried the conversation into other channels.

In a few moments Natalie appeared, and Dudley greeted her with covert anxiety; but with her there seemed to be nothing amiss. She was adorably risqué and yet remote, as usual, and, throughout the dinner, which followed, her abstinence, which had come to seem almost a symbol of her consecration to men's service, was more marked than ever.

Dudley could make nothing of it, but, from that night, Oberowski was a changed man. He preserved a conventional exterior, as was to be expected, but his savoir-faire and nonchalance were incredibly shaken. He grew moody, silent, and at times, almost sullen. He fell to shifting uneasily, whenever Natalie was out of sight, and constantly made excuses to return for a moment to their apartments, whenever she remained behind.

It was impossible for Dudley to avoid speculation, for without any fathomable cause, the whole structure of their hitherto exhilarating intercourse began to sway and totter. Natalie also became, at length, affected and began visibly to struggle, in her efforts to hold them together—although remaining marvellously serene within herself. Cover it as they might, and did, the equanimity of the three was incomprehensibly shattered.

The subject of the jewel might have slipped the mind of Oberowski altogether, so assiduously did he ignore it; and it was this evasion which puzzled Dudley. Quite naturally, his first thought had been that the emerald had disappeared. But why, if that were the case, did his friend make no attempt to recover it? And what possible excuse would such a mischance offer for the man's changed attitude toward his companions? Thus, bit by bit, the conviction was forced upon Dudley that the Russian connected his wife in some manner with the theft. Consummately absurd as this conclusion appeared, it was the only one, which could account for Oberowski's behaviour.

The idea was inconceivably ridiculous—monstrous—crazy! Dudley was furious with the other man for entertaining it, and yet, in spite of himself, he too fell to watching Natalie and was finally obliged to admit that there was something curious and inexplicable in some of her actions.

The fact was that Natalie, having, with unparalleled skill, placed herself high above other women in attractiveness, had to pay the penalty of having her every slightest act stand out vividly—as something conspicuous and significant. She had carried her sex art so far that captivation was a foregone conclusion, and the war, which she waged without ceasing, was for the purpose of preserving unstained her immaculate seductiveness. Commit a crime she might, but be commonplace, she must not. And so long had she

been successful, that a collapse of her sovereignty would be nothing short of a calamity. For their own peace of mind, her adorers were forever striving to keep her steady on her pedestal and torturing themselves in the process. Suspicion of her was intolerable and therefore, once aroused, remained and rankled.

Comically enough, the two men, rivals against each other, became leagued into ever closer comradeship in their guard over the object of their affections; and, what with the efforts of each to restore peace to his own mind, to preserve a decent aspect of indifference before his companion and to keep accurately, at all times, within the precincts of cool and complacent imperturbability, prescribed by his code, each was reduced to a pitiable state of discomfiture.

At last Oberowski, who had less dread of the dramatic than the American, came to a decision. He called and found Dudley alone, late one afternoon, in the big, masculine, fire-lighted library of his up-town apartment.

IV

THEIR greetings over, the two men settled into deep chairs before the smouldering logs and smoked in silence for some time, while the daylight slowly faded and the room filled with warm, dusky shadows.

"Is it not a strange thing," Oberowski began at last, "how little one profits by past experience?"

His tone was properly impersonal, but his face glowed sombrely in the flickering firelight, like that of a priest in a dim cathedral. Oberowski contrived always to look romantically mediæval, and this was no light moment with him.

"Apropos of anything in particular?" contributed Dudley, flicking his ash.

"I was thinking of how many times over even the cleverest of us are fooled by women."

An obvious opening, but Dudley refused it, and eventually the Russian continued. "Very probably, you have noticed, *mon ami*, that I have been—not quite myself of late?"

Dudley nodded. "I saw you were a bit off your feed. Anything I can do for you?"

"Perhaps—yes—I think so—I will come to that. But first, please be frank—have you also, of late, noticed anything peculiar in the habits of—my wife?"

"In her habits? My dear fellow, I protest—"

"Ah, then you have. One more question. Have you, by chance, any influence over her maid?"

"The little Josephine—a pretty puss? Naturally I haven't entirely overlooked her, but 'pon honour—I say, old chap, what in thunder are you driving at?"

"Nothing, except that she runs true to type in every particular except one. Where Natalie is concerned, she can't be bought. I thought that possibly—"

"Evidently you've tried. Is she mixed up in your—problem—or whatever it is?"

"Has not a lady's maid always a part in her mistress' intrigues?"

"Then you do suspect—"

"I do—but I cannot comprehend how you should have guessed it—unless you yourself have seen—"

"No one could help seeing that you watch her—and of course that night you—"

"That I went up after my emerald? Yes, it was then that I discovered—"

"So I assumed, but I could scarcely offer assistance, when you so evidently wished to ignore it. But why should you imagine that your wife, or even the little Josephine—"

"She knows, of course. Only yesterday I caught her in the corridor with a note—but she was obdurate and I would not make a scene."

"But what could be her motive? Utter nonsense! Stanislas—what could have put such a kink into your brain?"

"Her motive, *mon cher*," replied Oberowski with a wry smile, "was doubtless the usual one. There remains but to ascertain the man."

"Do you even know that it was a man?"

"Do I know that he is a man? In Heaven's name, what else could he be? Are you crazy?"

"Well, I don't see why it couldn't have been—but, I say, since you've started, why don't you tell me about it?"

"Such is my intention. As I have said, it was on that night that—by the way, have not you yourself sometimes thought it strange that she should so insist upon shutting us out each evening, just before dinner? You know she does not usually persist in one trick so long."

"I can't say I thought much of that. I remember you said once yourself that it was because—"

There Dudley stuck, for he suddenly remembered the words Natalie had used upon that first evening of their meeting. "How else can you make him understand?" and "Here, give him this." Sentence after sentence came back to him.

"I know," Oberowski caught up the thread. "To think that after all of these years, I should have trusted a woman! It was then that she received him."

"She surely didn't reserve every night for that. She must have—Do get on."

"Attend then! The rooms of our suite are in a straight line, so that, while they are all connected by inner doors, each has also an outer door, opening upon the corridor. The salon comes first—then the chamber occupied by my wife—then her bath, and lastly my own room, with its bath beyond."

"My dear fellow, I fail to see—"

"Be patient, *mon ami*, this is all of importance. Upon the occasion, of which we have been speaking, I naturally passed all of the doors, until I reached my own. Judge of my astonishment, when, upon entering, I distinctly heard the voice of a man in my wife's apartment—the doors of the communicating bath being slightly ajar. After an instant of surprise, the thought came to me that it might be a hairdresser, or some such person. I did not distinguish the words of the man, but Natalie cried anxiously, 'Please be careful!' and then her outer door shut softly. I should have rushed immediately into the corridor, only that my wife continued to speak and in a tone so peculiar that I—I confess that like all of my countrymen, I am extremely jealous—when I have reason—and I listened."

"Well, and she said?"

"She said—I heard every word—'I cannot think, Josephine, what would happen to us, should Monsieur Oberowski ever find this out. But I was so unhappy, until you managed to admit him. I did not know what I should do when you first came to America. But this friendship with Monsieur Dudley makes it all so much easier.'"

Both men completely overlooked the indiscretion of this confidence concerning a woman, in the vitality of their interest in her.

Dudley, being the listener, armed at once in her defence. As her champion, he began to feel a virtuous indignation at the stupidity of her husband's charge, quite forgetting that he himself had done some queer speculating about her movements.

"And from that you imagine that your wife was an accomplice? My dear Stanislas, you are raving."

"An accomplice? That is scarcely the usual term—but—"

"It's what you meant. You find a jewel missing and because you overhear—"

"A jewel missing! It is you who are mad!"

"Why—the emerald—was it not—isn't that what the fuss is about?"

"Mon Dieu! What can you have been thinking? This has nothing to do with the emerald."

"But that's what you went after and I supposed—was it there?"

"How should I know? I did not look. What is a paltry trinket compared with—how dared you believe that I could suspect Natalie of—?"

"But what is it then?"

"It is plain enough—she has a lover."

"No!"

Dudley was literally dumfounded. It was an idea which had not entered his head. If this were true, they were both outraged. Had he not resigned himself to passivity and to the worship of her unapproachableness? Had she not thus made a fool of him, too? Brrrr! They must have revenge! These thoughts scurried through Dudley's brain, while he sat slumped in his big chair, looking as plump, blond and helpless as a pat of butter. He tried to protest, although himself convinced, at once, and beyond argument.

"It's impossible. She's always with us—and she's had no opportunity to know—"

"Undoubtedly she has known him a long time. Oh, there is no question. Everything confirms it. I have detected a thousand small signs. One night I even saw the shadow of a man upon the glass above her door, but when I had gained admittance, of course, I found no one there. I have said nothing to her, for I have determined to confront them together."

"He can't be a Frenchman, for don't you remember that she told Josephine that she must learn English?"

"I had not thought of that, but it is true."

"Well, what are we going to do about it?" Dudley was all eagerness to begin.

"I have laid a plan."

"Yes?"

"I have told Natalie—before coming here—that to-night you and I will dine with some other gentlemen—*à la* stag,—I believe you call it. I asked if she would mind very much if I left her alone—with us *une grande passion* is an affair of importance—like business with you—we give to it our time and attention. But, ah no, she did not mind. She would rest and Josephine would serve her in her room, should she require anything. The little fox! Of course she will send for him. They will think to have hours of happiness.

"I have arranged everything. Early in the evening, we will slip into my rooms in the dark. We may even enter the wardrobe, so that should that chit of a Josephine come spying, she will not see us. When we hear voices, or when it grows late enough so that we know he must have arrived, we will contrive to hide ourselves in her bath. Once he is there, she will undoubtedly set the maid to watching in the corridor and she herself will be absorbed. At the proper moment, we will enter her room. If the door between is locked, one of us—you—must hasten into the corridor and guard the outer door, while I force open the inner one."

"If Josephine should come into the bath?"

"We must silence her."

"And your man?"

"Knows nothing—and has been sent to the opera."

"And when you have them—what then?"

"This." Oberowski drew from his pocket a small automatic revolver.

"Not for her." Dudley had not thought so far and now was shocked.

"For her first, *mon ami*,—but he will not escape!"

"Good God! Such things aren't done here. For him, perhaps—but for her—it will be enough to—why can't you just—Oh Lord—I don't know what we ought to do. It will make a hideous scandal and mess. I won't go on with it—I declare I won't." Dudley presented a pathetic lump of distress.

"But you must. I must have a witness to declare that my cause was just."

"Horsewhip him, if you like, but don't shoot 'em up."

"It appears to me, Monsieur Dudley, that you have small understanding of affairs of honour. In this barbarous country, where one may not call a man out, there is but one thing to do."

Dudley thought hard for an instant and then compromised. "I'll go, if you'll promise not to touch her. After all, you see, she isn't necessarily unworthy because she happens to prefer

someone else to you," he concluded, taking a distorted pleasure in putting Oberowski on a par with himself.

"Or to you?" sneered the Russian, smarting under Dudley's remark.

Both men were shocked into unbalance by the strain of events. Dudley was horrified at his implication in the matter and yet was wound in the coils by his infatuation. He simply had to see it out and in spite of his own chagrin, he felt that he must protect Natalie, if he could—his temperament not being of the emotional type which demands death as the only solution to a tangle.

Just before they started out, Oberowski once more drew the revolver from his pocket and looked at it sadly.

"It is the only way," he said once more, and then added: "If she is false to me, she must die. Only one thing could be worse. Were she false to herself, I should no longer desire to live."

V

THE first part of Oberowski's programme was easily carried into effect. The two gentlemen, not wishing to use a car which might be recognized, took a taxi back to the hotel, entered by a side door, passed hastily through the foyer without encountering anyone of consequence, and at length succeeded in secreting themselves in the capacious closet, attached to the Russian's bedroom, without attracting the slightest attention.

There they spent an exceedingly uncomfortable and somewhat undignified hour, squatting amid the smother of clothing, without venturing even to whisper and without the consolation of smoke. Oberowski had removed the key after locking the door and when, at last, a barely audible sound reached their ears and a line of light showed suddenly below the door, he set his eye to the hole and was rewarded by the sight of Josephine, demure and trim in black silk and white ruffles, who cast an appraising glance about the chamber, peeped carelessly into the further bath, tried the outer door and, finding it securely fastened, switched off the lights and withdrew, leaving them again in utter darkness.

They endured through another dragging half hour and then, with infinite caution, Oberowski unlocked the closet door and they emerged, with a sense of relief, from their place of concealment.

Dudley's enthusiasm for vengeance had had time to cool and he felt the situation to be growing momentarily more awkward. Indeed, he had an uneasy suspicion that they were being a bit ridiculous; but he saw no way of escape. Oberowski, on the contrary, was stimulated by deviousness. He was thoroughly alert and his excitement, while well controlled, was intense. To him there could be nothing ludicrous in machinations surrounding an affair of the heart. It was a moment of consuming interest, verging on the tragic.

Slowly and silently he led the way to the side of the room nearest Natalie's apartment. At the door of her bath he paused, stooped his ear to the keyhole and listened.

There were certainly voices.

Very gingerly he tried the knob. It gave without a sound and the door swung open.

Fortune favoured them. The bathroom was unlighted, the opposite door was closed, and the transom stood open, so that every word, uttered in the room beyond, was distinct, and Natalie was, at that moment, speaking—in French, a tongue which was, of course, perfectly intelligible to the eavesdroppers.

"Josephine," she was saying, "he is very late. Are you sure that you named the hour correctly?"

"But certainly, Madame. He is being stupid."

"Not stupid, Josephine. How can you say such a thing? Think how cleverly he has continually escaped the observation of Monsieur Oberowski. Not once has he been discovered, although of late, it has been so difficult.

I believe that Monsieur suspects something, but a little uncertainty will do no harm."

The two men, poised upon the outer threshold, strained their ears, to lose no word.

"Is it not *drole, ma petite*, how simply the wisest man can be duped? What great babies they all are—fancying we are forever just what they wish us to be! Is it not heavenly that tonight there is no haste?"

She laughed—a delicious lilt of mockery—while in the shadows outside two backs stiffened, two faces set sternly and two highly incensed gentlemen tiptoed further into the bath. . . . A soft knock reached their ears, then the light step of the maid, then the sound of the closing door, and, "At last!" breathed Natalie.

"I am so sorry to be a trifle late," replied a carefully modulated masculine voice—a shade obsequious perhaps, but it behooves a man to be humble when he has given his mistress cause for annoyance. "I was unavoidably detained. Some one wished to speak with me below."

There followed a brief interval of silence and then a shuffling, as though a piece of furniture were being moved—probably Natalie's chaise-longue.

Oberowski's face was grim. By placing a hand upon Dudley's shoulder, he succeeded in balancing himself upon the edge of the marble tub, from which position he could command a view, through the transom, of the far corner of the lighted room.

"Shall I draw the curtains, Madame?" queried Josephine.

"Permit me," said the unknown man and, for an instant, there appeared within the range of Oberowski's vision the shining back of a well-brushed head and a pair of broad shoulders under a correctly cut evening coat. The Russian's fingers curled lovingly about the revolver in his pocket; but his footing was precarious, a slip would be fatal and he decided to descend and wait.

There followed a period during which no one spoke, but during which all three culprits seemed to be moving about and to be making some small arrangements for their further comfort and satisfaction. Then—

"You may go now, Josephine, and keep guard, as usual, from the alcove at the end of the hall. It is a strange whim of Monsieur Oberowski's—his dislike of seeing me thus—but men must be humoured, *n'est ce pas*, Josephine? I believe even our good Monsieur Dudley might feel some chagrin, if he knew. What children they are!" Again that dainty, gurgling chuckle.

She was being sarcastic at their expense! She was laughing at them both, with her lover! Infamous! Dudley was no longer sorry for her. All considerations were scattered. It was a time for action. He took a step forward, but Oberowski's hand held him back. It was not yet—the crucial moment.

"Go, Josephine, I am impatient."

What a tale the words told of long intimacy!

The sounds of the maid's departure were plain. There followed a swishing of Natalie's silks—then stillness—then, "Ah Delicieux!" and a soft sigh of utter content.

The silence, which throbbed through the darkness to the watchers, seemed palpitant. To Oberowski, with the memories of many such purple pauses, and to Dudley, wrought almost to madness, this tension of waiting was one of indescribable torment. They both drew breaths so hissing and hard that, had not the occupants of the other room been absorbed, they must have been overheard. Oberowski grasped the handle of the last door which separated him from his wife's Lothario. With his other hand he held his revolver in readiness, his finger on the trigger. Dudley half crouched behind him, his teeth set and his fists clenched.

"Oh," purred Natalie, hesitating a little between the words, as though she stopped to caress—her voice was slightly muffled, too, as a voice might be when issuing from a mouth close

pressed to another's cheek — "sometimes — I am — hongree — just — for this."

It was too much! Oberowski tore open the door and stood blinking in the light.

In the centre of the room sat Natalie. Before her was a small, round table heaped high with food — entrées, salads and meats. Behind her chair stood a waiter in the act of pouring cold beer into her emptied glass.

"And your American bifsteck," Natalie cooed, glancing up for a second into the impassive face of the servant and at the same time conveying a generous portion of mashed potato toward her lips, "How it is good!"

THE BETTER SELF

By Elsie McCormick

I PASSED her house last night without going in. It is not that she has ceased to charm me. I admit that she still possesses the lure she had for me in those mad, glad, golden days of not so very long ago. But last night, as I went by her house, I thought of the little girl I had married—of her goodness, her simple trust. She would be waiting for me, praying for me perhaps. Feeling that I could not bring sorrow into so sweet a life, I passed the other woman's house without entering. It was much better so.

Besides, she had gone away for the summer.

YOU ARE LIKE FORESTS

By David Morton

YOU are like forests, I am like the sun:
Cool shadows haunt your heart, and secret ways
Lie deep along your soul, where faint winds run
With playful tuning all the summer days.
Dim, rocky paths that seek no certain place
Hide and reveal and hint of what is fair:
A loveliness prefigured in your face,
A mystery foreshadowed in your hair.

All day I burn above you, and all day
I seek the knowledge that is never won,
The treasure that still haunts and hides away;—
Yet, sometimes there are spaces flecked with sun.
And sometimes sudden blossoms wake and start,
Wood-flowers reaching sunward from your heart.

THE TURN OF THE WHEEL

By Grenville Vernon

I

THE child raised her head weakly from the pillow. The effort was too much for her and the head fell again. Her eyelids were heavy with the fever, the blond hair matted with sweat strayed over her forehead. On the coverlet her hand rested, a flower of fragile wax. She breathed with difficulty, the pinched rose leaf nostrils quivering with each effort.

"He is coming? I am waiting for him. You have promised."

Out of the great bed, from under the silk canopy, the voice seemed to come already from the other world. It was not querulous, it did not even seem to suffer, but with all its weakness it had a strange insistence. Her mother bent over her, taking her hand in both of hers.

"Yes, dearest. He is coming."

The assurance quieted her. A wan smile passed over her face, and her eyes a moment before dull, with the glaze of coming death, brightened. Then, weariness intervening, she closed her eyes and lay very still.

The great room was now heavy with the silence. The white and gold bedstead, with the cupids climbing up its pillars, with its canopy of yellow silk, its general sense of voluptuous lassitude, was an example of the Regency at its best. Conceived under the inspiration of the courtesan, it possesses as a couch of pain for a fragile little child a poignant irony. The mother watching by the bedside felt this. The great spaces of the room, the ceiling by Boucher, the dressing table bright with silver, the coloured prints of Fragonard on the walls, all reflected the ironic shafts which were entering her heart. Yet she had brought her daughter into this room because it was her own. She had brought her there because she knew that the child was drifting from her, or rather that for the first time she felt the gulf which had always yawned between them. The doctor had told her that the time grew short, and in terror she realized that her child had never really been her own, that her soul she had never touched, perhaps because she had never tried. In an agony of self-reproach she had vowed that things would change, and from the nursery she had had her brought into this great room, a room which expressed so utterly the spirit of its inhabitant.

Yet now the child seemed even further from her. The huge spaces about her, the hard cruelty of the furniture, the artificial magnificence, swallowed her up. In these surroundings the mother had bloomed a splendid orchid. From the gold and the white and the silver, from the nymphs on the ceiling, from the twilight of the curtained windows she had drawn her richest substance. In this early Eighteenth Century conservatory, her soul and her body had alike blossomed. It was surroundings such as these which had enabled her to become the great artist that she was.

In the high pier glass she suddenly caught her reflection. Her face was drawn and tears had furrowed it, yet it was even then superbly beautiful. She was thirty-four, yet her figure was as of a girl of eighteen. Her voice was only beginning to be at its prime.

In her art and in her life no luxury nor success could be added. She had climbed the ladder and her head was already in the clouds.

The man who was her husband had surrounded her with all this luxury. She was perfectly married. This she knew. Her husband possessed her tastes, her desires, and he possessed the wealth to give them immediate satisfaction. She was not one of those who believed that poverty is the handmaid of art. She had known poverty and she knew that until its pressure had been removed, her soul had been stifled, her spirit cramped and stultified.

And then her husband was all that she desired most in men. He was distinguished in appearance and in manner, he was cultivated in his tastes, an admirable musician, an amateur in the best sense of the term. Moreover, he was tactful, patient, sympathetic. She loved him, she was happy with him. When very rarely she had looked back into her past, to the other man she had married when she was eighteen, the little anæmic, pale-faced, uninspired clerk, it was with a shudder. For eight years she had borne it, struggling towards the light, crushed by poverty, by the care of a daughter and weighted down continually by a man whose spiritual horizon was bounded by the walls of an office in which he never would rise, and the walls of a home into which he brought nothing except a dog-light fidelity to his wife and a complete inability to understand. Yet he had possessed a strange nobility. This she recognized. When the other man had appeared, when her chance for fame had come, he had quietly stepped aside. He had given up to her everything, even their daughter, whom he adored.

Her daughter alone had not understood. She loved her father, and her mother often sadly admitted, resembled him. Yet the luxury of her new surroundings she felt would transform her.

All women turn to softness as the flowers open to the sun. And her new husband had been kindness itself to the little girl. He had showered her with presents, with attentions. Never for an instant had he made her feel that she was anything but his own. Yet the child remained unmoved, even resentful. Before she had often been affectionate with her mother, especially in those interminable evenings when they had finished supper and her father had put on his slippers and taken off his coat, and after reading his paper, had proposed the inevitable game of checkers. Then the little girl would climb up on the sofa beside her mother and putting her arm about her would lay her cheek against hers. The mother remembered these months with a poignant bitterness. They had been so grey and hopeless, and yet now that she thought of them, filled with a tender warmth.

She had always possessed a voice. She used to sing the operatic airs even in those days, her husband was apt to drowse off in the midst of them, and only wake up when for self-defence she would break into "Silver Threads Among the Gold" or "Old Folks at Home." She had wanted to study, but it had been impossible. She sang, however, on Sunday in a church choir, and it was the organist who had taken an interest in her and introduced her to the man who was to create her opportunity. After her marriage she had gone with him to Europe for three years of hard study, four years in the Italian opera houses, and then the Metropolitan.

"He is coming? I am waiting for him. You have promised."

Again the child's voice, from the great recess of the bed. It was thin yet startlingly clear. The mother bent over her again.

"Yes, darling. He is coming. He will be here soon."

"Go and see if he is not at the corner. Go, please."

There was despair in the child's tone, despair and what was worse to the mother, unbelief. Her daughter's trust

—even in that she had failed. As she turned she again caught her image in the pier glass, and a shudder of revulsion swept over her. What right had she to her beauty, her figure, her stately carriage? Behind her reflection was that of the bed. Lost within it was a tiny hump showing under the coverlet. It seemed like nothing, and soon it would disappear forever. And she with her beauty would go on, proclaimed as Tosca, as Leonora. And to her daughter her fame meant nothing. She had a dim consciousness that the child hated it, hated her voice, her beauty, hated the great house her genius had won for them both. They had separated her from her father. And now she was lying there, in these alien surroundings, waiting for him and then for death.

"Go, please."

The cruelty of the words was stupendous, yet they must be obeyed. She stepped out into the corridor and down the marble of the curving staircase. At the foot, the dancing faun, a genuine Donatello, seemed to grimace at her from its pedestal, the softness of the Persian rug burned into her feet. A liveried footman stepped forward and threw open for her the great door, curtained with damask over its glass and iron. The footman's face was impassive, yet it too seemed to smile sardonically within. She stepped on to the pavement and gazed towards the avenue. She was bareheaded and she knew she must be attracting attention. But her daughter had commanded and she must obey.

II

How long she stood there she never knew, but it seemed to her an eternity. The cars swept by on the avenue interminably. She wondered who they contained, and whether they brought happiness or unhappiness. Then a bus stopped at the corner of the street and a figure descended, a little man, in a brown faded suit.

Her heart leapt forward, then stopped. He came walking quickly up the street, with that indecisive step she remembered, a step which sounded a symbol of his inner being. She fled up the steps and into the house.

"The gentleman who is coming you will show up to my room."

The footman bowed and she slipped up the staircase and into a side drawing-room. She could not meet him but she must see. The oppressive silence continued for a minute, and then below she heard his hesitating voice. Though he was on a supreme errand, he was awed by his surroundings. She could feel this at once. She had expected it. Yet somehow she felt no contempt for him, only a fear, and, odd to state, a sort of dull hatred. She heard his steps upon the staircase. They passed her. On the threshold of the bedroom she heard them stop; then she knew he had entered.

She waited, tense, quivering, her ears open for the slightest sound. She heard nothing. Why didn't he speak? Why didn't her daughter cry out? Could it be that he was too late? The blood was hammering in her brain, hammering, hammering. The house seemed to be full of echoes, of voices, of spectres. The echoes, the voices, the spectres were everywhere, everywhere, except there where he was and his daughter. She wanted to cry out, to demand that he leave. He had entered like a thief, he was a thief. He was stealing what he had long ago relinquished. She had won all because she had deserved to win it. He was nothing, a dull grey ghost of a man, a thing of despisal. Yet he was there and she could not order him to leave. The great house had become of cardboard, and the faun below its only veritable occupant.

And now the echoes became insistent. They were laughing at her, the voices were mocking her, the spectres gibbering. All that she won and had had become nothing. The very walls were rocking. Nothing was stable except that room, and that was like a mansion of the ages, of granite, rearing its power amid a phantasmagoria of

ironic laughter. And the silence of that room, its immutable insistence was terrifying. And she stole out into the corridor towards it, as to the only haven of reality left to her in the cataclysm.

She did not enter, though she tried to. The door was open but it was barred to her by an invisible power. From the storm about her and behind her she seemed to look into an abode of perfect peace. He was seated at the bedside, his daughter's hand in his. She had turned and was gazing up into his face; neither spoke, but between them there was a sense of utter understanding. Her wan features were gathered into a smile, a smile that never wavered. And her smile had entered into him. She saw him as she never before had seen him, this petty clerk, so far beneath her, transfigured by his daughter's love. The room seemed so small now, no space in it for anything except that sense of complete union, of the entrance of one soul into another.

And then she began to think; or rather thoughts drove themselves into her brain like arrows from the bow of some preternatural archer. Each arrow was barbed and each barb was poisoned. The house was a great tomb she had built for her daughter. As a tomb alone was her daughter happy in it, for gazing in at the white, smiling, upturned face, she realized that her daughter was happy in it at last.

Now she knew the true significance of its marmorean halls. Her husband had intended it as a palace of his love, but always she had felt something creeping from its foundations, something inexplicably cold. And now the cold had mounted, had become all enveloping. The walls were pregnant with it. It was more terrible in that it was not sensuous but absorbing, almost pontifical. It was a cold which would shut her forever from eternity, for she knew that only in her child was eternity possible. Her husband, her friends, her art were powerless to aid her. She had had a daughter, yet her womb was barren. The child's body was escaping her, the child's soul was eternal—but eternal not with her. She would rush in, demand the rights of motherhood, tear the child's hand from the strange man who was sitting there. She tried to pass the door, but her feet would not obey, the cold had frozen them to the threshold of the tomb!

The child was still smiling, yet she felt suddenly that something was different. The father was smiling too, but his smile now possessed a radiance which at first she did not understand. She saw him rise, release the hand, saw it fall gently on the coverlet. He bent over his daughter and kissed her gently on the brow, then as if supremely confident, he turned. With a gigantic effort she moved her feet from the doorway and stood aside. He walked towards her, no longer with a hesitating step, but firm, unwavering. He did not glance towards her. She knew that he did not see her, and as he passed her she knew that it was his daughter who was smiling from his eyes. He passed down the stairway, and she knew that with him passed his daughter. She passed out with him and out of her life forever. Then for the first time she rushed into the room and threw herself on her knees by the bedside. From the face of the dead child the smile had vanished. Far below her sounded the clang of the great door.

THE REUNION

By Mifflin Crane

HE was born in that city and returned to it at last, because he was at ease nowhere else. The sentimental shrinking that had kept him in alien towns so long weighed very little with him now; eleven years had blunted its effect. It no longer mattered that his former wife was still there, and the boy. It was preposterous to suppose that he would meet her, unwillingly find her face among so many thousand others, and at last he felt hardened to that chance, if it should happen.

And their boy—he had not seen the boy since they parted. His last memory was of a very small baby, incapable of speech, crawling along on the floor like a clumsy four-legged animal, howling through the long night, smiling like a seraph at odd moments. That would not suffice to delineate the child now, who must be entering the years of his adolescence. Doubtless he could not recognize his boy.

So he came back and took rooms in an old street that he had known well years before. He scorned the newer part of the city where miles of houses had appeared like sudden fungi, distressingly characterless, each one pushed out in front into a small porch, the roof supported by several wooden columns with remote Ionic volutes, above which a tiny bay-window projected like the pop-eye of a monster. His street was the lingering thoroughfare of an older and more gracious time. The houses were built up straight out of an extremely red brick that on bright days seemed freshly cleaned and scoured. Under each window was a ledge of old eroded marble, the front steps were marble and worn into concave hollows.

One of his rooms faced on the street and directly in front of his windows he had a view of a small store that did business with the neighbourhood school children in cheap candy and small toys. Sometimes he sat here and watched the boys and girls go in and out, experiencing at the evidence of their blitheness, a vague, half-defined melancholy. They sometimes reminded him of his boy; he thought of his wife, but he did not expect to see either of them. He had no idea where they lived, and moreover, she was married again.

One day he discovered an agreeable rathskeller a few blocks from his rooms and he made use of this retreat every day. He usually visited it for an hour or two in the afternoon and again for a similar period in the evening. He came to know many of the faces there; some of them, like his, were always present at certain hours. He became a member of a group that occupied one of the long tables in the under-cellar. They talked endlessly, drank beer out of tall steins with a pewter lid you could snap down with a sharp report, laughed a good deal, joked with the waiter. He considered himself fortunate to have discovered this place.

In the evenings and sometimes in the afternoon, the crowd played "Darts," using a large dart-board hung up on the wall. It was a game he had never found common in any city but this one; there he had known it since his earliest days; to play again was to revive old memories. He developed an extraordinary proficiency in throwing the darts

and frequently could put two or three of them, in a single throw, in the yellow circle that figured as sixty on the score. Only one other man, an ex-cavalry officer named Perry—but more popularly called the "Commodore"—was in any way his match; between these a fervid rivalry flourished. They were forever playing an endless championship match for honours that passed, with the fickleness of a coquette, from one to the other.

One day, rather late in the afternoon, returning from a game in which he had agreeably defeated the Commodore, he turned into his street and immediately noticed a boy staring into the window of the little store opposite his apartment. He happened to approach on the same side of the street, and the boy's profile was delineated sharply in a ray of red sunlight.

At once he was stirred by a profound conviction of knowing this youngster and then, as by reaction, that seemed impossible. Nevertheless his pace slowed, and he stared at the illuminated profile as if it were an arresting phenomenon. Then, suddenly, in a thrilling comprehension, he understood: the boy was his!

The truth of his recognition was manifest, for the features of his former wife were reproduced startlingly in the face of the intent boy. Yet despite his assurance he was aware of a strangely contradictory doubt: for a moment the encounter was incredible. Now he stopped walking and stood on the street watching his son, who never turned his head. The sight of this face stirred his mind with the overtones of old memories; glimpses of days he never thought about flickered in his recollections like half revealed pictures. The boy was still staring into the window. He walked slowly towards him, and stood close to him.

"What interests you so much?" he asked.

The youngster turned, looked at him a moment, and then gave a quick, generous smile.

"They're foreign stamps," he said. "I'm just beginning to collect them myself. There's a lot in this window I'd like to have."

Somehow he had expected a different voice—his own voice? or his wife's? The boy's was a fresh soprano without special characterization and in a way that relieved him and made him more at ease. He followed the gaze of his son and looked in at the window. There were several cheap collections of stamps on display.

"You save stamps? How many have you?"

"Oh, not many! I've just begun. They cost a lot of money!"

"Do you live near here?"

"Not far. On Delancy Street. I pass on my way from school. I never knew this store kept stamps before."

He watched the boy's face, listened to his clear voice, looked into his eager eyes.

"I used to save postage stamps myself," he said slowly. "—years ago. I still have some. Would you like to look at mine?"

"I'd like to, all right!"

"You see that house over there? I live right upstairs."

"Can we go over and look at your stamps now?"

"Not now. I haven't time to let you look at them now. Would you like to see them to-morrow?"

"Yes, to-morrow if I can then."

"You may come to-morrow, after school. Stop at that house and I'll leave word that you are to be shown right up. I'll have the stamps ready for you to see."

He said good-bye to the boy and crossed the street. He went up to his room and sat down near one of the windows. Looking out he saw that his son had gone and the street for the moment was empty.

II

The encounter no longer seemed strange, but simply natural. It was not peculiar that a father should talk to his own child, or meet him in the same city. But he wondered for a moment

why he had invited the boy to his rooms. He was conscious of no sudden affection, but what he found was a stirring of reminiscences that moved him uncertainly, indefinably, like an obscure poem, like the patter of rain on the windows, like a walk through the silent streets, late at night. He was not certain that his sensations were pleasant, but nevertheless, he desired them.

Presently he thought of his wife, or, acquiring a momentary mental precision, the woman that had been his wife. She was married again and it was false to couple her name with a possessive. He recalled the sudden catastrophe of their parting, her inflexible anger, his own regret. The incident that had divided them was now remote and bore no adequate proportion to the looming fact of their separation; his trifling lapse was insignificant in the diminished perspective of so many years; he accepted his condition as something of the fates, unexplained.

The next morning he consulted the telephone book, found a dealer in stamps and coins, and visited him. He bought a cheap collection of foreign stamps, a thousand or more, and took them back to his rooms. They were mounted on separate sheets, according to nationalities; he spread them all out on a table and let them stand for the coming of his boy. Early in the afternoon he went out and when he returned his son was seated in the hall downstairs, waiting for him.

The boy greeted him shyly and followed in silence behind his heels as he led the way upstairs. He opened the door of his sitting room and let his visitor go in first.

"I've just put the stamps there on the table," he said. "Have you got as many as that?"

There was a whistled exclamation.

"I should say not! Didn't it take you a long time to save all those?"

"Not so long. I don't collect them any more. I'm going to give you some of these."

The boy was bending over the table, holding the sheets in his hands.

"British Colonies!" he exclaimed. "I haven't many from British Colonies, except some from Canada. Here's a Shirmoor, three *pies*, unused! I like unused stamps, don't you?"

The father smiled.

"Yes, I like them that way. They look cleaner, don't they? You can have that stamp."

The boy was incredulous.

"Yes, I mean you can have it; tear it off. I'll give you others. I don't collect them nowadays."

He began to ask the child about himself, his school, his activities, his expectations, his home, his mother.

"What about your father? he asked.

"My father's a travelling man. Sometimes we don't see him for a month or two. That's a long time, isn't it?"

"Yes, that's a long time."

He questioned no longer, and the boy examined the sheets of stamps in silence. The father stood near him, looking at the young intent face that flushed an enthusiasm to these meaningless little squares of paper like a poet to dreams. He studied the features of his son, but the boy gave him very little thought as an individual; he was largely a stirer of recollections. Still it shocked him a little to discover that the youngster believed a stepfather his own. The other man flared up in his thoughts a moment as a curious, incalculable outsider—and then faded out again like a dying flame.

Reluctantly at last the boy took his leave, but he gladly promised to come back again. He did this with promptness—in two days. In such a way they began their intimacy. His son accepted it as a phenomenon, with unquestioning assurance; the father with some wonder, as a man little used to children, who finds them curious and even a trifle fabulous. He finally ascribed his interest to a natural paternal instinct, but truthfully his willingness to entertain the youngster had a different inspiration.

In looking at his son's face, the line of his cheek, the pout of his lips, the curve of his chin, or in seeing some

eager gesture of his small hands, there were luminous seconds of remembrance, moments when the mother was expressed through her son, and instances of past event returned to his mind with the sudden virility of new experiences; in a degree the years were renewed, he lived again.

He now called his son Eugene and liked to say the full name without a diminutive. He bought him little presents, he gradually gave him, sheet by sheet, the stamps he had purchased, and he secured more in order that there might be always an attraction in his rooms. He seldom found time to visit his rathskeller, and the Commodore's claims to mastery seemed a trivial, a childish matter.

III

One afternoon, waiting for Eugene to stop in after school, his landlady knocked on his door and told him that a woman was waiting to see him in the parlour below. Surprised, he left his room and went downstairs. The flight of stairs terminated in a very narrow hall, almost opposite the parlour door. A pair of heavy brown curtains, brocaded after an ineffectual pattern, concealed the room from one in the hallway. He parted these curtains and went in. A woman was seated near the window. As she heard his footsteps she turned and stood up. The light was at her back, her face was in shadow, it was a moment or more before he recognized her. Then his eyes grew wider and he tightened his fingers together: it was his wife.

She spoke to him first.

"I knew it was you!" she said. "I guessed it!"

He found himself giving explanations, irrationally, out of place. There was not a formal word of greeting between them.

"Don't think that I hunted around and lured him here," he said. "I discovered him just by accident. I've only been back a few months. It was just by accident, too, that I took rooms in this neighbourhood. I had no idea you lived anywhere near. It wasn't until I saw Eugene . . . Confound it, haven't I a right to see my own son? You don't think I tried to kidnap him, do you?"

"I was certain it was you," she went on. "I asked him where he was spending all his time. I made him describe you. I came to find out. . . ."

They were both standing. He was not far within the door, his body poised forward in an attitude of surprise and expostulation. She was still close to the window; one of her hands touched the chair-back; the afternoon sunlight reddened her fustic hair and outlined the edges of her cheeks in fire; a purple shadow like a gauze veil misted her other features.

He became aware of their curious beginning; it was no beginning.

"Then you'll talk to me," he said. "We'd better sit down."

She accepted his suggestion and slowly seated herself. He crossed the room and took the chair at the other window. Now her face was half turned to the light and he could see her plainly.

She had changed, of course. She hadn't the delicacy of feature he remembered. Her chin was rounder, her lips less transparently red, her eyes not so suddenly azure. Nevertheless, she had kept lovely and an old pleasure in looking at her was returning to him.

The sunlight hair was unchanged, xanthine, radiant; it captured lights as formerly and held them as glints, like spirits. And he remembered her voice—it was the same voice now—clear with a certain thinness, not coloured with many overtones, a slender stream of white sound, like a flute blown in a very open space. He sat silently appraising her, and she returned his glances, looking back at him.

"Louise, you can't blame me," he said finally, "for making friends with him?"

"No, that wouldn't be reasonable. But I wanted to make sure."

"That it was I? What are you going to do now?"

"I don't know. . . ."

"I mean, are you going to tell Eugene that he can't see me? How would you explain that?"

"It could be managed. . . . Oh, I don't mind him seeing you! It's the trouble it might make, the difficulties."

The faintest colour came into her cheeks, like the shadow of a pale, red flower on smooth water.

"I haven't disliked you," she said, "for six or seven years; I haven't thought of you with dislike. Do you believe that? But when he comes back, he'll ask questions; he'll find out. . . . Eugene's . . . father."

Looking at her he began to laugh softly and her expression became one of surprise.

"Don't get angry," he said at last. "But isn't this a very absurd complication? I don't know just why it amuses me. But as for *him*—Eugene's 'father' is very remote to me, Louise. I can't imagine him. I can't get a picture of him. What's he like? Who does he resemble?"

"Never mind," she said.

He leaned toward her, resting his hands on his knees. He looked straight into her face.

"You touched me a moment ago—when you said you didn't dislike me. You surprised me too."

"But it's been eleven years since we've seen each other."

"Yes, eleven years."

"And that many years changes one's ideas. You shouldn't be surprised!"

They were suddenly closer; an almost ponderable atmosphere of intimacy seemed to enfold them; they were unexpectedly in sympathy. The room appeared withdrawn and somehow aloof for them, separated from the street and the house and subject no longer to the echoes of alien concerns, as if it were a chamber in a remote, wide place, found only for their communion. They were smiling at each other.

He had a memory then of their former companionship and their unfailing congeniality. She pleased him as before, not only with the quality he found pleasant in the shape of her face, her lips, her eyes, her hair, the movements of her pale hands, but with the consciousness of sympathy that was assured in her nearness. He forgot the circumstances and the interlude of their separation. He accepted her presence now as his reality, his waking moments; the rest was a dream.

She was glad of her courage, she was glad she had confessed, even abruptly, the disappearance of her rancour; she knew now that she was fond of him. She had sacrificed something of her pride: that gave her pleasure. She examined him and found him unchanged, for her eyes refused any significance in the physical alterations they recorded. What was essential remained without difference: it was clear to be near him.

They began to talk to each other again, questioning, answering, scarcely waiting for questions and answers. She asked him the intimate trivialities of his daily life, how he spent his mornings, his afternoons, his evenings, what were his diversions. He queried her about her own activities, recalling some of the things she used to do; were her interests now the same? As if they had agreed it, they avoided certain interrogations; he revived none of the circumstances of their parting; she told him nothing of her husband. Finally she stood up and gave him her hand.

"I can't stay any longer now," she said.

"You're going to let me come and see you?"

"Yes, if you come soon."

"Will you be at home to-morrow?"

"To-morrow afternoon?"

"I'll come to-morrow afternoon, then."

He took her out into the hall, she passed through the door, and smiled at him as she went down the steps.

IV

He did not drink with his friends that night; he delivered his hours to musing, to memories deliberately recalled. He thought of Louise before he had married her, when her white charm almost frightened him, and he feared to tell that he loved her. He recalled the two years after their marriage, the notable two years—and that brought him to their catastrophe. He saw, nebulously, the parenthetical black-eyed girl that had bemused him for a week; her face, strangely enough, was of all the most elusive. She should have been only an incident; a year later she would have been forgotten. What an accident!—Louise's discovery! He remembered his shame, not the shame of commission, but that of being found out. And his wife's pale fury, her inflexible tragic resolve! He remained in his rooms until after midnight, thinking of these things.

He awoke late the following morning, but the few hours until after lunch drew out long. He looked at his watch a hundred times. He tried a dozen devices to put the slow seconds behind him; he looked in four or five different books, wrote several letters, searched through a box of old papers and wondered why he had saved them. Finally, he went out to get something to eat. Then he returned—and prepared to visit Louise.

He felt a little foolish as he left his rooms, but that, he believed, was a corollary of feeling young again. There was not far to walk. Her street was reached and he slackened his pace; he watched two vociferous small boys scrambling on the sidewalk, he paused to observe a coloured servant polishing a doorknob, he looked into the cart of a huckster standing at the kerb—but he came to her house at last. He hesitated to mount the steps, he hesitated to ring the bell. . . . A maid answered the door and he was taken into the parlour.

In a moment Louise entered, he stood up, she took his hand and pressed it, she was smiling at him.

"I'm glad you came early," she said.

"Am I too early?"

"No, no! We want to have a long talk. You must go, too, before Eugene comes back from school."

He glanced about the room, and saw a piano at the further end.

"Do you still play?" he asked.

"You remember my playing! Yes, I play about the same as ever!"

"Do you recollect the waltz I used to like: you got so tired of playing it for me. I can't think of the name."

She laughed, she took him by the hand.

"Come over here," she said, "see if this is what you mean."

Seated at the piano, she began the rhythmic movement of her fingers over the keys. It was the air he liked, and she played it again, after eleven years of silence. The years were gone; they were the old companions, the old intimates again. He stood standing beside her, watching her white, moving fingers, raising his eyes from these to her bent profile, to her sunlight hair. He breathed in the subtle transpiration of a perfume.

She stopped, the room was silent, she looked up at him.

"That piece is like an old scrap book," she said. "It recalls all sorts of things."

He did not know what to say, and stood a little awkwardly beside her.

"Don't you think so?" she asked.

Without waiting for his answer she stood up and took a photograph from the top of the piano, she put it in his hands mutely. He stared at it uncomprehending, observing a large man, handsome, moustached, heavy-browed, assured. He interrogated her with a look.

"That's my husband," she said.

For a moment the photograph

made this remote man almost real, but still he could not conceive a flesh and blood image of him. He gave her back the picture and she returned it to its place.

"Shall I tell you about him?" she asked. "Sit down here beside me!"

He seated himself on the bench with her; his hand touched her dress; he wanted to caress her.

"He's good to me," she said. "He's away most of the time—I don't care what he does when he's away. Do you believe that? I've become different, haven't I? I . . . I don't like him, much. . . ."

"No, you're no different."

"I'm the same to you?"

Her face was turned to him, her head fell back a little, and under the slightly parted line of her lips the jewelled edges of her teeth made a nacre curve. Her hair pressed against the back of her neck, seeming to efflorescе from the white column like a yellow flower. Her hands lay in her lap; he took them in his own. She moved toward him, their lips met, he kissed her. She freed her hands and drew him close with her arms; she returned his kiss with her own.

"Do you still think of me?" she murmured. "Do you love me? Have you always thought of me?"

He told her he had, but a second after his lips had said the words, it surprised him to realize that this was untrue. No, he had forgotten her, he had forgotten the savour of her kisses, the touch of her pale hands, the smooth line of her cheeks as he drew the tips of his fingers across them, the silken texture of her hair pressed against his palms. Now only she revived the memories of these, the tingle of old delights.

"I never forgot you for a moment," she said. "I wanted to send for you and couldn't. Why did you ever believe me? Why did you let me lose you?"

She waited for no answer, but kissed him again. She held him close to her, like a mother her lost child. She imprisoned him in her arms, pushed her fingers through his hair; her breath blew out moistly against his cheek. He was astonished at her sudden ardour and felt somehow helpless to give back her warmth. He endeavoured to return her caress, but her eager lips were too quick for his response. He felt in a way breathless, hopelessly outrun, left irretrievably to the rear.

"You won't leave me again?" she asked.

He stared into her wide azure eyes.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you understand what I mean! I don't care anything about *him!* Let him come home; he won't find me here. I'll go wherever you say! I'll be ready to-morrow, I'll go with you any time! Aren't we the same lovers?"

He said yes, he was glad to be saved further speech by the seal of her lips. A little clock on the mantle struck the hour in strokes of a silver bell. She drew away from him suddenly.

"You must go now!" she exclaimed. "Eugene will be home any minute. We must think what we will do with him. Come to me to-morrow with your plans, my lover!"

VI

She took him to the door and he went out into the street with her whispered good-bye repeating itself again and again in his ears. A strange levity possessed him, it seemed diffused from his feet to his head; he had the curious sensation of walking on something yielding and light. He reached his house and went up to his rooms. Clothes were lying about in disorder as he had left them; opened books were scattered on his table; yellowed old papers protruded from a box.

"Damn those things!" he said. "I'll have to burn them!"

He sat down in a chair near the win-

dow. Strangely, he was greatly tired, physically weary. He stretched out his legs, he sighed. He pressed his palms against his forehead and stared out at the quiet street. A passing woman glanced up at him; he frowned.

Finally he stood up, but he was still unrested. Without a consciously framed thought, but nevertheless purposefully, he went over to his trunk and opened it. He began packing in his clothes, his papers, his books. Once he paused before he put in his writing paper.

"No, I won't write her a letter," he decided. "What could I say?"

He went on with his labours. The squares of the windows became dusk, the street lamps flared up, his long shadow was projected across the carpet. At last he closed down the lid of the trunk and went out.

He walked to his rathskeller and descended the steps. Inside he was greeted vociferously. The Commodore eyed him with eagerness.

"What the devil's been wrong with you?" he called. "Afraid to come round any more? Well, I'll trim you in a little game to-night!"

He began to smile sadly.

"I'll just trim *you*," he said. "This will be my last chance, old man."

"What do you mean?"

He told them then: he was going back West to-morrow.

"Somehow I don't like it in the East," he said.

Like a counterpoint to his thoughts their expostulations moved through his mind. He would be sorry to leave these fellows. He sighed; a strong melancholy stirred him, a deep regret for the gone and irretrievable moved him, the regret of a woman for her passed charm, of a singer for his vanished skill, of an old poet for his first dreams.

It was an unhappy thing to admit—but he was getting too old to be a lover.

THE SEAMSTRESS

By Amanda Benjamin Hall

EACH morning through my little gate
She bears some fairy dream of dress;
Her feet come shining with their freight
Of joyful eagerness.

And with two hands that seem to smile
Along the silken garment's hem,
She tells her stitches all the while
The hope she has for them.

The sun, that ardent fellow, long
Stays marvelling upon her hair,
Her needle is a silver song
That quivers in the air.

Till evening folds her task away,
And home she threads the brooding street,
Her colour dying like the day
And weights upon her feet.

ONE AND ONE MAKE TWO

By Walter Vogdes

ETHEL MERTON was somewhat like her name; a good office type, blonde and blue eyed, gracious to her employers and sharp to the office boy. She had a warm cheek and nimble, business-like fingers.

She was happy in her work, but she often felt that something was lacking. She had yearnings and dreams, and she often became terribly lonely at twilight.

One morning, as Ethel opened her desk, she saw a strange young man in the main office talking to the boss. She guessed that the young man as the new chief clerk and she began to make calculations. She made them almost unconsciously. He was rather good looking; he looked a hustler, too. His salary would be a hundred and fifty a month; yes, they could do on that if she worked until he got his raise. They would take a little house in the suburbs, or perhaps an apartment in town. They would dine out twice a week, perhaps, and do one theatre. And—

Just then the boss came over and said:

"Miss Merton, this is Mr. Dwan, the new chief clerk. You'll please take orders from him."

Ethel looked up cordially and told Mr. Dwan that she was pleased to meet him. He gave her a fairly interested look and said he hoped that they'd get on.

When Ethel went home that night she went over her plans in detail. They were really old plans, but now she had someone to fit to them.

She was delightfully frank and unaffected with Fred Dwan and they got along splendidly. He was rather carefully businesslike with her, but Ethel thought she saw through that. He couldn't hide a sudden keen look that would come at times when his eyes fixed for a brief moment on her throat or the rather low V of her blouse. Ethel never saw the look, but she knew it was there.

In the course of office events Fred invited her out to dinner. That happened one evening when she had worked overtime. She received no extra pay for it from the company; the company was large, wealthy and important, and naturally it never paid stenographers for overtime.

After dinner they went to a movie, and after the movie they walked to Ethel's home. On the way Fred told her his ideas about life. They were good, sound newspaper ideas and they embraced religion, politics and business. Fred said that a man was a fool not to get on in business and that he was no fool.

Ethel agreed; she felt that he and she would get along splendidly. As he enlarged on the ideas that have put our civilization on its excellent working basis Ethel scarcely heard what he said, but she felt a delightfully warm and cosy sensation steal over her. She felt near to him.

He did not kiss her good-night, and, as Ethel looked back over the evening, she was rather glad he hadn't. It showed his respect for her. The next time, she thought, they would talk of love and marriage, and he would voice his theories.

And the next time he *did* talk of love and marriage. He thought they were both splendid things. Especially love. And Ethel talked, too, and again she

felt that warm, contented, near feeling. And he *did* kiss her good-night.

There may be girls who think that a man's kiss means a promise to marry, but Ethel wasn't one of them. However, she did think that it meant a definite step forward in her relations with Fred Dwan. He'd find it more difficult to be impersonal with her after the kiss. So she reasoned after he had left her.

But Ethel was wrong. It was rather curious the way he managed to hold the impersonal attitude. He really seemed to take a step backward after the kiss. A week passed and he did not invite her to go to dinner or to a movie.

Ethel was piqued. She began to study ways and means. There were two ways; she might throw herself at him, and take a chance on his chivalry, or she might simulate indifference. These are both good ways, as all readers of literature know.

After considering his chivalry and that side of the problem, she decided on indifference. It was the more womanly way, and, if it were successful, so much more satisfying.

So she remained courteous, but she gave him a chance to see that she didn't care. She didn't write letters to herself in a masculine hand, and she didn't go out with other men and mention them casually to him. She didn't know any other men. She might have lied to him and pretended that there were other men, but she didn't have the courage or the imagination or the wickedness to do that. She just smiled and put on a little indifferent attitude that sometimes became rather stiff and set.

It was a pitiable performance, and one night she went home and cried for an hour, as she realized her failure. After the cry she sat up on her bed and tried to plan.

Should she ask him to take her out? Should she throw herself at him, should she make him take her home, and then throw her arms about his neck and kiss him and beg him to love her? That's what her heart called to her to do; it was the open thing to do, but at the thought of it all her womanliness reared to its full height and shrieked:

"If you can't win him in the decent underhanded way, let him go!"

The ache in her heart was sharp and new to her. She wanted love, and there was no love. Only a faraway young man, who bowed courteously, and remarked that he was no fool about business.

With a little sigh Ethel rose and undressed slowly. She slept through tumultuous dreams and clothed herself in the morning with weary, nervous fingers. She had to slap the colour into her face before she left the room.

She went through the day mechanically. But the next night she slept well and when she arose she did not have to slap the colour into her cheeks. She even smiled at herself in the mirror.

When she reached her desk Fred Dwan and another young man were in the boss's office. Ethel stole a look at the young man, saw that he was well set up and that he looked a hustler. She was not taken completely by surprise when Fred brought him over to her desk and said:

"Miss Merton, this is Mr. Hart. Mr. Hart is the new chief clerk." And turning to the young man, "You'll find Miss Merton an excellent stenographer."

"You leaving?" said Ethel.

"Yes, western branch," answered Fred.

When Fred had gone, and Ethel had collected her thoughts, she began to let her glances stray toward the new chief clerk. He undoubtedly was a likable young man. About the middle of the afternoon she brought her precious plans out for inspection. Of course they could do on a hundred and fifty a month if she worked until he got his raise. One theatre a week, and perhaps two dinners out. . . . She had a faint sense of humour and she smiled a bit just then.

MRS. DRAINGER'S VEIL

By Howard Mumford Jones

IF the house had been merely shabby I doubt whether I would have been interested. Every residential section has its shabby houses, monuments to departed aspirations, falling into slow decay in the midst of weedy yards, sometimes uninhabited and sometimes sheltering one or two members of the family who apparently have been left, like the ancient furniture, to be forgotten. The paint cracks and peels, the windows fall into impossible angles or are boarded up, the porches sag, the chimneys lose a brick or two and come in time to look like stumps of teeth. By and by the whole structure seems to sink into the grass under the burden of its neglect, and only a faint tenacity, a melancholy inertia keeps it from crumbling altogether. Then suddenly the inhabitants die, the neighbours awake to a sudden sense of change, and that is all.

The Drainger house was such a house, but it was more. It was mysterious, uncommunicative. In the midst of the commonplace residence block, with its white cottages, its monotonous lawns and uninteresting gardens, the contrast was startling, secretive, contemptuous. The tall grass waved ironically at the neat grassplots which flanked it. The great untrimmed elms sent branches to beat against the decaying shingles, or downward into the faces of passers-by, with patrician indifference to the law. They had, indeed, the air of ragged retainers, haughty and starving, and yet crowding about the house as if to hide the poverty of their master from the eyes of the vulgar. City ordinances required the laying of cement walks: the rotting boardwalk in front of the Drainger mansion was already treacherous, and no one complained.

The building itself was extraordinary. Built in the days when Crosby had been a lumber town and building material had consequently been cheap, its pretensions were immense. A tall, six-sided tower occupied two-thirds of the front, an elaborate affair, crowned by rusty ironwork in lieu of battlements. Windows were inserted at appropriate intervals, suggesting a donjon keep or a page from Walter Scott. The heavy brown shutters were never opened. There was a grim angularity to the deep porch below, a military cut to the bare front door which added to the forbidding character of the place. Behind this imposing front the rest of the building lay like the parts of a castle, each portion a little lower than the preceding. There were four of these sections, like four platforms, their flat roofs crowned with further rusty ironwork. The windows were infrequent and all barred, and a massive elm to the east of the house threw over them a gloomy and impenetrable shade. Although the whole building had been painted brown, time and the weather had combined to make it almost black, the only patch of colour being the rich green of the mossy shingles on the roof of the porch.

I had first noticed the Drainger house because of its oddity. Then I was impressed by its air of speechless and implacable resentment. So far as I could observe it was empty; no foot disturbed the rank grass or troubled the dismal porches. The windows were never thrown open to the sunlight. The front door, in the month I had spent in Cros-

by, remained locked. I had once observed a grocery waggon standing in front of the house, but this, I assumed, was because the driver wished to leave his horse in the shade.

Proceeding homeward one night to my cousin's, Mark Jedfrey, with whom I was spending the summer, I was startled, when I came in front of the Drainger place, to see a light in the front window of the tower on the ground floor. It was moonlight, and the heavy shadows sculptured the old mansion into fantastic shapes, revealing a barred window inscrutably facing the moon, carving the top of the house into gargoyles of light and throwing the porch into Egyptian darkness. The light through the shutter of the window was therefore as unexpected as a stab. I paused without knowing it. Apparently I was observed; there was a light sound of footsteps from the invisible porch and the creaking, followed by the shutting, of the front door. Immediately afterwards the light was extinguished.

The person who had been on the porch had moved so quickly and so quietly, and the street, drenched in the July moonlight, seemed so still, that I wondered a moment later whether to credit my senses. At any rate, it was not my business, I concluded, to stand staring at a strange house at one o'clock in the morning, and I resumed my walk home.

A week later, a change in the routine of my daily life made me a regular visitant in the neighbourhood. Twice a day I passed the Drainger house. In the morning it seemed to resist the genial sunlight, drawing its hedge of shade trees closer about it and remaining impervious to all suggestions of warmth. And on my return from the office in the evening it was as sealed, as autumnal as ever. The pleasant sounds of human intercourse, the chatting of women on the steps or the whirr of lawn-mowers should, I fancied, at least unshutter a window or burst open a frigid door. But the warm impulses of neighbourhood life, like the cries of the boys at their evening game of baseball, broke unheeded against that clifflike impassivity. No one stirred within; no one, not even the paper boy, dared to cut across the front yard; and a pile of yellowing bills on the front steps testified to the unavailing temerity of advertisers.

There was nothing to show I had not dreamed the episode of the light, as I had begun to think of it. I could have made inquiries—Helen, Mark's wife, knows everybody—but I did not. I could have consulted the directory. But I preferred to keep the house to myself. I had a secret sense of proprietorship (I am, I suppose, a romantic and imaginative soul) and I preferred that the mystery should come to me. My alert devotion must, I thought, have its reward. Indeed, my daily walks to and from my work took on the character of a silent duel between the expressionless walls and my expressionless face, and I was not going to be beaten in taciturnity.

One Friday morning, well into August, I was surprised and curious to see a woman standing under the elms in the front of the Drainger mansion. The neighbourhood was, for the moment, deserted. I concealed my eagerness under a mask of impassivity. I thought myself masterly as, pretending an interest in nothing, I yet watched the place out of the tail of my eye. Imagine my increasing surprise to observe that as I approached, the person in question came slowly down to the junction of her walk with the sidewalk, so that, as I drew near we were face to face.

"You are Mr. Gillingham?" she asked.

I stopped mechanically and raised my hat. I visit Crosby regularly, where I am well known, so that I was not surprised to be thus accosted by one who was a stranger to me. She was about forty, obviously a spinster, and clad in a costume not merely out-of-date, but so far out-of-date as to possess a false air of theatricalism. I can best describe her (I am not clever in matters of dress) by saying that, with the ex-

ception that she was not wearing a hoopskirt, she appeared to have stepped out of *Godey's Lady Book*. A Paisley shawl was wrapped tightly around her head, although the morning was warm, and its subdued brilliance clashed oddly with the faded lemon of her dress. Her face was small, the features regular, but her complexion was more than sallow, it was yellow, the yellow of dying grass and sunless places. A spot of rouge glared on either cheek, and, with her eyes, which were black and brilliant, gave her face the look of fever. Her dark hair, just visible under the shawl, deepened the hectic quality of her features, although, as a matter of fact, she was not ill.

"You are a lawyer?" she continued, her brilliant eyes searching my face, I thought with some boldness, and without waiting for an answer she said, "Come," and walked abruptly toward the house.

I followed her. On the porch we paused; my companion turned and searched the street, which was still empty, a fact which seemed to increase her satisfaction, and without giving me a glance, unlocked the front door with a key which she was carrying.

II

She led me into the house and through two of the rooms into a third before we paused. The transition from sunlight to darkness had been too rapid for my eyes, so that, for some moments I could only stand ridiculously in the middle of the room. I was conscious of the presence of a third person—intensely conscious—and exceedingly uncomfortable. My conductor busied herself pushing forward a chair which, fortunately, she placed under the shuttered window. To this I stumbled.

"You are a lawyer?" asked a voice from the darkness.

I was startled.

The voice sprang from the corner I was facing as though it were a live thing that had seized upon me. It was the voice of a woman, of great age apparently, and yet it possessed a fierce, biting energy that no amount of years could weaken.

"This is Mr. Gillingham," said my conductor with, I thought, a shade of asperity. "Of course he's a lawyer."

To this there succeeded a silence, broken only by the sibilant drawing in of the younger woman's breath.

"I am indeed a lawyer," I said at length. "In what way can I be of service?"

"We see no one," said the imperious voice abruptly. "You must therefore pardon the manner in which I have had you called in."

I was now able to discern something through the gloom.

The speaker sat in extreme shadow. Her dress was a blur in the darkness, faintly outlining her person, which seemed to be of medium height, though in the great chair she looked shrunken and huddled together. Her eyes, faint points of light, were steadfastly fixed on mine, but her face was, I thought, in such deep shadow that I could not make it out.

But the concentration points, so to speak, were not her eyes, but her hands. They lay in her lap motionless, and yet they were extraordinarily alive. Even in that light their emaciated condition testified to her extreme age; but they were not decrepit, they seemed to glow with a steady light, an inward and consuming energy.

"You may leave us, Emily," said the voice, and Emily, who had been hovering with what I somehow felt to be a hint of malice, unwillingly withdrew. The other closed her eyes until the shutting of the door assured us of privacy.

"I am dying," she began suddenly in her strange, impersonal manner.

"Do not interrupt me," she added coldly as I was about to utter some inanity. "I desire to be certain of one thing while there is time, namely, that my wishes respecting the disposition of my body shall be respected—in every particular."

Her manner indicated nothing out of

the ordinary. She might have been speaking of the merest commonplace.

"You are a lawyer. How can I so arrange that the directions I will leave must be carried out after my death?"

"Ordinarily," I managed to stammer, "directions in such matters when given to the heirs, have the binding force—"

There was a second's pause.

"That is not what I wish," continued the inflexible voice. "I wish to compel attention to my instructions."

"A provision can be inserted in your will," I said at length, "which would make the inheritance of your property conditional upon the fulfilment of your wishes."

She seemed to consider this. Her hands moved slightly in her lap.

"And if those conditions were not fulfilled?"

"Your estate would go elsewhere as you might direct."

There was a prolonged pause. Her eyes disappeared, and try as I would, I could not distinguish her face. Her hands shifted, and she spoke.

"Step to the door and call my daughter. I am Mrs. Drainger."

I might have been the servant. I arose and groped my way toward the door. She neither offered me any direction as to its location, nor commented upon the gloom in which I hesitated.

I reached the door and, opening it, was about to call, when I was aware of Miss Drainger's presence; she seemed to have materialized, a pale spectre, out of the dusk, and I was again conscious of vague malice.

"Your mother wished me to call you," I said, holding the door open.

Her strange eyes searched mine for a brief moment as she entered the room.

Suddenly Miss Drainger, poised in the gloom over her mother's chair, seemed to my startled sense like a monstrous pallid moth. The impression, though momentary, was none the less vivid. I felt choked, uncomfortable. An instant only, and Mrs. Drainger's voice recalled me to my senses.

She gave directions for the bringing of a box containing some documents she wished. Miss Drainger said nothing, but turned abruptly, gave me another sidelong glance and left the room.

In the time she was absent neither of us spoke. The strange woman in the corner shrank, it seemed to me, deeper into the dusk, until only her extraordinary hands remained; and I sat in my uncomfortable and ancient chair, the little streaks of sunlight from the blind making odd patterns on my legs and hands.

The return of the daughter with a tin box which she placed in my hands was followed by an extraordinary moment. I became, if I did not deceive myself, increasingly conscious of a silent struggle going on between the two. Mrs. Drainger, in her biting, inflexible voice, again requested her daughter to leave us. Emily demurred and in the interval that followed I had a sense of crisis. Nay, I fancied more; upon hearing Emily's brief protest Mrs. Drainger slowly clenched her hands, and the movement was as though she were steadily bending her daughter's will to her purpose. At length, with the same sibilant in-taking of the breath I had observed before, Emily turned and swept through the door, her face unusually yellow, the little spots of rouge on her cheeks burning sullenly.

The box she had given me contained a will made by Mrs. Drainger, together with a few securities totalling no great value, and other less important documents. This will she now directed me to modify so that the inheritance of the property upon her death would be conditional upon the fulfilment by the heir of certain conditions which she said she would indicate in writing.

I asked why those conditions could now now be indicated.

"You are all alike," she said bitterly. "All alike in your curiosity. I prefer to put them in writing."

I assured her of the inviolability of her confidence and rose.

"Stay," she commanded. "If that girl asks you any impertinent questions send her to me."

Her hands moved quickly as she spoke. The concentration of her voice alarmed me so that I could think of nothing to say. I bowed and withdrew. It was only when I was once outside the room that I recalled, curiously enough, at no time during my interview had I seen Mrs. Drainger's face.

Miss Emily was not visible. I was about to search for the street door when, in her usual extraordinary manner, she appeared out of the gloom.

"What did she want?" she demanded, almost fiercely, her eyes holding me as though they were hands.

I explained as best I could why I could not tell her.

"Humph!" she ejaculated, and without further speech led me to the door.

"There will be fees, I suppose," she said contemptuously, staring at her hand upon the doorknob. "Do not expect much. You are the only person who has entered this house for a year."

I was embarrassed how to reply.

"Poverty is like contagion. People flee from it," she added with a mirthless laugh, and opened the door.

I bade her farewell. She stared at me, a shrewd look in her black eyes, but said nothing. The instant I was on the porch the door was shut and locked behind me.

III

On my way to Jedfrey's office I could not shake off my unfavourable impression of Miss Drainger. I assured myself again and again that the oddity of their manner of life was sufficient reason for her peculiarities, and yet the same picture of her kept recurring to my mind—a vision of her flitting to and fro in that great house like a monstrous evil moth. I imagined her pale face with its spots of rouge and her lemon dress so unlike any costume I had ever seen. I pictured her materializing, as I phrased it, out of the shadows; hovering expectantly (I knew not why) over the gaunt form in the great chair by the window; or peering out of the unopened shutters as she moved from room to room. I positively grew ashamed of myself for my fancies.

The following morning a square, yellowed envelope (everything about that place seemed to lack freshness), addressed in the fine, regular hand of a generation ago, caught my eye in the heap of mail, and putting aside more important matters, I at once opened it. The note was from Mrs. Drainger, evidently written in her own hand, and contained the provision I was to insert in the will. It was sufficiently queer. She desired that upon her death no one should venture to see her face, which would be covered, she wrote, by a thick veil, and she was particularly anxious that her daughter Emily should respect her wishes. Otherwise her property was to go elsewhere.

The energy and clarity exhibited by the old lady on the previous day forbade any notion that this preposterous idea sprang from a mind touched by the infirmities of age, and yet her stipulation was so peculiar, so irrational that I pondered long over my duty in the case. What Mrs. Drainger wanted was, in one sense, absurdly simple—merely the revision of her will, scarcely more than the retyping of that simple document; but I was conscious of a deeper demand; as though, to the support of her desires, she had called in my person upon the assurance, even the majesty of the law. I could not justify her breaking of what I instinctively took to be a determined habit of seclusion except by postulating deeper issues than I saw on the surface. There was no reason why I should not revise the document and be done with it; queerer provisions have been made in other wills. Yet, to make the inheritance conditional upon so strange a request might be unfair to Miss Drainger. It was true, I distrusted her; but that was not to the point, and this provision was one that she would have every natural incentive to break.

A further thought occurred—there might be other children not known to me who would expect some share in the modest estate: finding the property

willed to Emily upon so tenuous a provision, they might easily charge that that provision had been broken, when proof and disproof would be equally difficult, and Mrs. Drainger's wish that her companion (despite her singular testament) to be sole heir would then not be met. The will simply provided that, should Emily forfeit her right to the property the estate should go to a local charity; no mention was made of other children; but this silence did not disprove their existence.

I was too well aware of the ease with which so singular a document could be attacked in court, not to be uneasy. I resolved finally again to consult my client (if the name could attach to so imperious a lady) and briefly announcing my absence to Mark Jedfrey, I sought the Drainger residence.

The old house looked as deathlike as ever. It seemed incredible that human existence could be possible within its sunless walls. Indeed, my persistent efforts at the rusty bell-handle produced only a feeble echo, and the round-eyed interest of a group of urchins, who volunteered, after a time, that nobody lived there. I was beginning to agree with them when a key was turned in the lock and the weather-beaten door yielded a few cautious inches. Miss Emily looked out at me.

"It's you," she said ungraciously, and seemed rather to hope that I would disappear as at the uttering of a charm.

"I wish to see your mother," I said.

She hesitated. At length, opening the door scarcely enough to admit me, she bade me enter, and disappeared. The house was as dismal as ever.

"Come in here," she said, appearing after her usual sudden fashion in a dim doorway and looking more like a wraith than ever.

Her eyes burned me as I walked cautiously into the other room.

It was one I had not seen, but Mrs. Drainger was seated, as before, in the obscurest corner, a blur of white in which her pale hands looked like pallid lumps of flame. I faced my invisible client.

"I have come about the will," I began, and was immediately conscious of Miss Emily's voracious interest. The opening was, as I recognized too late, scarcely diplomatic.

"Will?" said the daughter in a harsh voice. "You are making a will? You —you—"

She looked enormously tall and unpleasant as she spoke.

"Yes, my dear," responded Mrs. Drainger dryly.

"You? *You?*" continued the daughter rapidly. "After all these years? It is incredible. It is incredible." She laughed unpleasantly with closed eyes.

Then, conscious that she was betraying emotions not meant for me, she turned to my chair. "You will understand that the information is something of a shock for a daughter. My mother's condition—"

"Mrs. Drainger," I ventured to interrupt, "wishes merely to make certain changes in an instrument already drawn up." I was conscious of a stir, whether of gratitude or of resentment, from the darkened corner.

Emily seemed momentarily bewildered.

"You frightened me," she said at length with a frankness palpably false.

"I quite understand," I retorted, the sham being, I thought, tolerably obvious. "And now if your mother and I—"

She took the hint.

"I will leave you," she said.

It was evident I had not won her gratitude.

As the door closed behind her I heard a low sound from Mrs. Drainger.

"I am afraid—afraid," she murmured weakly. I think forgetting my presence; and then, as if suddenly conscious of a slip:

"Old women, Mr. Gillingham, have their fancies. Death seems at times uncomfortably close."

I murmured some polite deprecation, but I was sure it was not death that frightened her.

Drawing from my pocket her letter

and the copy of the will I had prepared I explained as best I could why I had come. I was tolerably confused. I could not question her entire sanity, and as I did not wish in any way to hint at what I felt concerning Emily I soon involved myself in a veritable dust of legal pedantry. Finally I asked whether there were other children.

Mrs. Drainger heard me out in ironic silence.

"I have no others," she admitted at length, and added after a second, "Thank heaven!"

"There remains only one other matter," I said. "The provisions of your will are such that unless she knows them in advance Miss Emily will almost inevitably forfeit the inheritance."

"I am aware of that," said the voice, and the pale hands moved imperceptibly. "I am quite well aware of what I am doing, Mr. Gillingham, and I repeat, my daughter is not to ask impertinent questions."

I bowed, somewhat ruffled. I added that it would be necessary to witness her signature in the usual manner. She seemed surprised to learn that two persons were necessary, and remained silent.

"Call Emily," she directed.

"Emily will not do," I objected, "since she is a possible beneficiary."

"I am aware," she responded coldly. "Call Emily."

Emily, being summoned, was directed to procure the presence of a Mrs. Mueller, living near by, who occasionally helped with the work. She seemed unusually tractable and departed on her errand without comment.

For some three or four minutes Mrs. Drainger did not speak. I could not, of course, see her face; but once or twice her hands shifted in her lap, and I thought she was perturbed. My own conversational efforts had been so uniformly unfortunate that I concluded to remain silent.

"You will see an old, worn woman," she said musingly. "But it does not matter."

The entrance of Miss Emily, followed by that of a stout, German woman, prevented the necessity of a reply. I explained what was wanted; Emily assisted me in making it clear to Mrs. Mueller, and then withdrew to the door, where she assumed an attitude of disinterestedness — too obviously assumed it, I thought.

It became necessary to have more light, and Emily went to the window and opened the shutter. I turned to where Mrs. Drainger sat, the will in my left hand, my fountain pen in the other, and in that attitude I hesitated for a brief moment of incredulity. I thought I was looking at a woman without a head.

A second's glance showed how mistaken I was. The thin, emaciated figure, clad like her daughter's, in a fashion long forgotten, was, as I had surmised, somewhat shrunken by age. Her strange hands, loosely held in her lap, were wrinkled with a thousand wrinkles like crumpled parchment, and yet, even in that crueler light, they conveyed the impression of power. They seemed like antennæ wherewith their owner touched and tested the outer world. As I sought the reason for this impression I saw that the face and head were entirely wrapped in the thick folds of a black veil, which was so arranged that the eyes alone were visible. These seemed to swim up faintly as from the bottom of a well.

My imperceptible pause of surprise drew from Emily that sudden in-taking of breath I have before remarked, and I could not but feel that she intended, as I felt, a subtle sarcasm in the sound. Accordingly I made no comment, secured Mrs. Drainger's signature without difficulty, then that of Mrs. Mueller (who, during the whole procedure, utered no word), and added my own with as natural an air as I could manage. Miss Emily led Mrs. Mueller away and I offered the completed document to Mrs. Drainger.

"Keep it," she said with some feebleness and then, more loudly,

"I will take care. Keep it. Make

her call for it when it is time. Now let her come to me."

My search for the daughter necessitated my going through the several rooms, so that I had a tolerable notion of the house. Miss Emily's inheritance would not be great, although the lot was itself valuable. The furniture was all old and of just that antiquity which lacks value without acquiring charm. I remarked a vast what-not in one corner; one table promised well, and there were one or two really fine engravings; but for the most part the upholstered chairs were shabby, the tables and desks old and cracked, and the carpets of a faded elegance. The kitchen into which I passed was notably bleak, and the decrepit wood-stove seemed never to have held a fire.

Miss Drainger came in the back entrance as I entered the kitchen. Her face was paler than I had ever seen it. She confronted me silently.

"If you are through," she said bitingly, "I will let you out the front door,"

I observed mildly that her mother wanted her and accompanied her into the sitting room. I hesitated how best to broach the matter I had in mind without giving offence, and resolved, unfortunately, on a deliberate lie.

"My fee has been paid," I said, awkwardly enough.

She searched my face. I affected to be busy with my hat.

"I see," she commented with a short, cynical laugh. "Sometimes it is done that way, sometimes in ways less pleasant. We are quite used to it. I suppose I had better thank you."

I felt my face flush scarlet.

"It is not necessary," I faltered and was grateful to get out of the house without further blunders.

I filled my lungs with the sweet August morning in positive relief, feeling that I had been in the land of the dead.

IV

I HAD no further contact with the Draingers for some days. Indeed, the whole curious episode was beginning to fade in my mind when some three weeks later, a dinner that Helen was giving recalled my experience and added fresh interest to my relations with them. I sat next to one of those conventionally pretty women who require only the surface of one's attention, and I was preparing to be bored for the rest of the evening when I caught a chance remark of Isobel Allyn's.

Mrs. Allyn (everybody calls her Isobel) was talking across the table to Dr. Fawcett.

"You've lost your mysterious veiled lady," she said.

"Yes," said Fawcett.

Fawcett is a good fellow, about forty-five, and inclined to be reticent.

"Veiled lady?" shrilled some feminine nonentity, much to Fawcett's distaste. "How thrilling! Do tell us about it!"

"There is nothing to tell," growled Fawcett.

Isobel, however, is not easily swept aside.

"Oh, yes, there is," she persisted. "Dr. Fawcett has for years had a mysterious patient whose face, whenever he visits her, remains obstinately invisible. Now, without revealing her features, the lady has had the bad taste to die."

I leaned forward.

"Is it Mrs. Drainger, Fawcett?"

He turned to me with mingled relief and inquiry.

"Yes. How did you know?"

I promised myself something later and remained vague.

"I had heard of her," I said.

His eyes questioned mine.

"Everyone must have heard of her but me," came the same irritating voice. "Aren't you going to tell us?"

"Merely a patient of mine," said Fawcett impolitely. "She has just died—at an advanced age."

It was cruel, but justified.

Isobel was penitent.

"I am sorry," she said prettily, and Helen hastily introduced the subject of automobiles, concerning which she knows very little.

I sought out Fawcett on the porch after dinner.

"About Mrs. Drainger," he said. "How did you know?"

"I am, I suppose, her lawyer—or was, rather," I explained. "I have her will."

"I thought soulless corporations and bloated bondholders were more your line."

"They are," I said, and briefly recounted how I had come to be Mrs. Drainger's attorney

Fawcett's cigar glowed in the dark. His wicker chair creaked as he shifted his weight.

"The daughter is a curious creature," he observed slowly, "something uncanny about her, even devilish. Somehow I picture her striding up and down the shabby rooms like a lioness. The town has grown, the neighbourhood changed, and I don't believe either of them was aware of it. They lived absolutely in the past. So far as I could see they hated each other—not, you understand, with any petty, feminine spite, but splendidly, like elemental beings. I never went into the house without feeling that hot, suppressed atmosphere of hate. And yet there they were, tied together, as absolutely alone as though they had been left on a deserted island.

"Tied together—I fancy that's it. Emily could, of course, have gone away. And yet I have a queer fancy, too, that so long as Mrs. Drainger wore her veil the girl could not leave; that if she had once uncovered her face the tie between them would have been broken. The old lady knew that, certainly, and I think Emily knew it, too, and I fancy she must have tried again and again to lift the covering from her mother's face. But Mrs. Drainger—she was will incarnate—was always just too much for her."

I told him about the provisions of her will.

"Ah," he said, "it is even clearer now. My theory is right. The veil was, as it were, the symbol that held them together. But now, I wonder, does the will represent the old lady's revenge, or her forgiveness?"

"We shall know shortly," I interjected.

Fawcett nodded in the dark.

"Captain Drainger built the house," he continued inconsequentially, "back in the forties for himself and his young bride, and, though it looks bleak enough now, it was for the Crosbys of those days a mansion of the first class. The captain, the tradition is, was a wild, obstinate fellow with black hair and brilliant eyes (I fancy Emily has much of her father in her), and nobody was greatly surprised, when the war broke out, to have him at first lukewarm, and then avowedly à Confederate. Of course he might as well have professed atheism or free love in this locality—he might better have blown his brains out—which he practically did, anyway. Public sentiment forced him out of the state and over Mason and Dixon's line, and he entered the rebel army as a cavalry captain, and deliberately (we heard) got himself killed. Of course the Drainger fortune, fair enough for those days, went to pieces at once.

"Mrs. Drainger immediately adopted the policy of complete seclusion she was to follow ever after. When the captain left, it was said they would not speak; at any rate, she broke off her friendships, refused herself to callers, and saw nobody. Her condition served her as an excuse, but everybody knew, I guess, the real reason why she kept to herself. There, alone with an old servant who died a year or so later, she walked the floor of that mockery of a house, or sat brooding over the coming of the child. It must have been pleasant! Emily was born just before we heard of the captain's death.

"One or two of her nearest friends tried to comfort her, but she would see no one except the doctor—who, by the way, was my father. I have inherited the Draingers, you see."

Fawcett's cigar was out, but he did not light another.

"My mother, from whom I got all this, said there was something magnificent in the way Mrs. Drainger suffered, in the way she resented any intrusion

upon her self-imposed solitude. My mother was a courageous woman, but she said she was positively frightened when Mrs. Drainger, a tall, fair woman with straight, level eyes, came to the door in answer to her knock.

"'You may go back, Lucy Fawcett,' she said. 'A rebel has no friends,' and shut the door in my mother's mortified face.

"At first there was some grumbling and ill-natured talk, but it soon ceased. People who knew her family (she was a Merion) saw pretty clearly that Mrs. Drainger's heart had, for most purposes, stopped beating when the captain found the bullet he was looking for, and tumbled from his horse. What was left was the magnificent shell of a woman in that great shell of a house—that, and the child. I can picture her sitting upright in some great chair by the shuttered window, peering out at the rank grass and the elm trees, or else wandering, always majestic, from room to room with her baby in her arms, listening to the silence. She cut herself off from the world of the living as though she had been buried, and she tried to bring up Emily as though they were in the land of the dead.

"Emily was, of course, her only friend, her only companion, her only link with life. Tragically enough, she was to fail her. She grew up, a solitary, imperious child, I imagine much as she is now. She strikes me as being one of those unfortunate natures who are as old at twelve as they ever will be. Mother hinted at terrible scenes between the woman, like a tragedy queen, and her baby, the child stormily demanding to be like other children, the mother stonily listening and never bending her ways. The will of the mother—I grow fanciful—was like ice-cold metal, the child was hot with life, and the result was passionate rebellions, followed by long weeks of sullen silence. And always Mrs. Drainger hugged her isolation and hugged her child to that isolation because she was her father's daughter. How or on what they lived, nobody knows.

"You understand," Fawcett interposed, "that this is mainly conjecture. They were long before my day then. I am merely putting together what I heard and my own inferences from what I have seen. And it seems to me, looking back, that Mrs. Drainger set, as it were, when the Captain died, into that terrible fixed mould she was to wear ever after, and the lonely child with the brilliant black eyes was not merely fighting solitude, she was beating her passionate little fists against the granite of her mother's nature. And I fancy that at an early age (she was very mature, mind), Emily came to hate her mother quite earnestly and conscientiously, and, so to speak, without meanness or malice.

"Of course it was impossible to keep the girl totally confined. She did not, it is true, go to school, but she went out more or less, and in a queer, unnatural way she made friends. That was later, however. She never went to parties, since her mother would not give any, and she was proud—all the Draingers are proud. And she had no playmates. Until she was a young woman, so far as human intercourse was concerned, Emily might as well have had the plague in the house.

"But she went out as she grew older. For instance, she went to church, not, I fancy, because she had any need of religion, but because it was a place she could go without embarrassment or comment."

There was a moment of silence as though Fawcett was pondering how to continue, and I heard the blur of voices from the hall and prayed that nobody would come.

"We lived across the street from them in those days," he resumed, "and I was a young cub from the medical school, home only at vacations. I really don't know all that happened. Indeed, it seems to me that I have known the Draingers only by flashes at any time. They were always wrapped in mysterious human differences, and even when you saw her on the street some of that surcharged atmosphere of

silence seemed to colour Emily's face. She had grown up then. Her clothes were quite orthodox, and she was handsome as a leopard is handsome, but always she struck me as haunted by a vague fear, a fear of the house, perhaps, and of her mother's power to rule her. I used to fancy, watching her return to their sombre dwelling, that she was drawn back as to a spider's web by the fascination of its tragic silences. The story of her life is like a strange book read by lightning, with many leaves turned over unseen between the flashes."

"You were in love with her!" I cried.

"No," he said slowly. "I might have been, but I wasn't. You are right, though, in guessing there was love in her story, only it was not I, it was Charlie Brede who, so to speak, sprang the trap.

"She got to know him at church. Charles was an honest, ordinary, likable boy with a face like a Greek god and a streak of the most unaccountable perversity. His obstinacy was at once intense and wild. That made him interesting and, though there was no greatness behind it, any woman would have loved his face. Don't imagine, furthermore, because I have supposed they met at church, that he was narrowly pious. Everybody went to church in those days—there was nowhere else to go. Charlie was, in short, an ordinary, well-behaved youngster, except that his face hinted at possibilities he couldn't have fulfilled, and except for his dash of narrow rebellion. I don't see how, to such a stormy creature as Emily, he could have been bearable.

"The affair had got well along when I came home in the spring. At first, I gathered from the talk, Emily had met him only away from the house (it was not home), at church or downtown, or in such ways as she could unsuspiciously contrive. Then somehow Charlie suspected something queer and insisted, in one of his obstinate fits, on his duty to call.

"I know this because they stood for a long time under the trees in front of our house, Charles's voice booming up through the scented darkness as he argued. Emily put him off with various feminine subterfuges—she was, I remember, rather magnificent in her despairing diplomacy—and I thought for a while she would succeed. Then I heard Brede's voice, wrathful and sullen, with a quality of finality.

"'If you are ashamed of me—' he said, and walked off.

"It was the one statement she could not outwit. Emily stood for a moment, then—I can imagine with what terrific surrender of pride—ran after him.

"'Charlie, Charlie!' she called. He stopped. She came up to him. There was a low murmur of voices, and I thought she was crying.

"'Tuesday, then,' he said and kissed her.

"Emily waited until he was well away, and in the moonlight I could see her raise her hands to her head in a gesture that might have been despair, that might have been puzzlement. Then she crossed the street into the blackness of their porch.

"Did she love him? I don't know. Do you?"

The question hung motionless in the air. Fawcett lit another cigar.

"One would have expected something regal about the man Emily Drainger should choose. You agree with me, I suspect, that she is—or was—leonine, terrific. Perhaps she was deceived by his face. Perhaps, after the manner of lovers, she found splendid lights and vistas in the Charlie Brede the rest of us considered rather ordinary. Or perhaps, since she had lived her solitary life so long, pestered and haunted by her mother, any pair of lips would have awakened in her the same powerful and primitive impulses. He was her man, and she wanted him, and she was not to get him. I have even thought that she did not love him at all: that she was quite willing to feign a passion in order to escape from that terrible mother with her eyes forever focussed on her tragedy, her mother, and that gaunt, grim house. I am superstitious

about that house. Nothing good can come out of it. It warped Mrs. Drainger out of all semblance to human nature, and it was warping Emily, and Mrs. Drainger was somehow the presiding genius, the central heart of that sinister fascination.

"Charlie called that Tuesday night, I know, because I stayed home to see. I was quite unashamed in doing so. He had, I must say, courage. But he did not see Emily. There were two chairs on the porch, and, to the enormous surprise of the neighbourhood, which had not seen Mrs. Drainger for years, she occupied one of those chairs and Charlie the other, and, after a fashion, they conversed. I could not hear what they said, but there was in Mrs. Drainger's calm, in her placid acceptance of the situation, a quality of danger. I had an impulse to cry out. She made me think of a steel instrument ready to close. And, as Charlie had an obstinate streak in him, it became fairy evident that we were witnessing a duel—a duel for the possession of Emily Drainger. Mute obstinacy was pitted against will, and Emily, enchained and chafing, was permitted only to stand by.

"Considered from Mrs. Drainger's point of view, she was not, I suppose, so hideously unfair. One doesn't shut off the last ray of light from the prisoner's dungeon or grudge clothing to a naked man. And her daughter was, as I have intimated, her only link with the living. Hers was the selfishness of narrow hunger, if you will, of an almost literal nakedness. And yet one cannot live alone with the dead for twenty years and remain sane. Since Mrs. Drainger's life was to Mrs. Drainger entirely normal, she could not, in the nature of the case, imagine what she was condemning Emily to. The mother thought of Brede, I fancy, as of some spiritual calamity that would rob her of half her soul, and she brought to the issue her one power—her power of breaking people's wills, and fought him as fiercely as she would have fought the devil.

"Charlie called again Friday and had again the pleasure of Mrs. Drainger's society. He called again next week; this time both Emily and Mrs. Drainger entertained him. The result was, I imagine, even more unsatisfactory—what Mrs. Drainger wanted. If it had not been so terrific, it would have been funny. Some of us, indeed, took to making wagers on the contest. He called repeatedly. Whether he saw Emily or not, there was always Mrs. Drainger.

"It is not her mere presence, mind, that was disconcerting. The old lady was somehow sinister in her silent intensity, in her subtle power of infiltration. Emily seemed, so far as I could see, thoroughly cowed. Strain as she would at her leash, the keeper held her, and the tedious pattern of their struggling conversation concealed bright chains. This, Mrs. Drainger seemed to say, is what you are coming to. And Charlie would look appealingly at Emily, and she at him, and they both looked at the imperturbable monster of a woman, and on Charlie's lips the desperate proposals to go somewhere, to do something, to get out of it, died before he could utter them. Only mute obstinacy held him there. Mrs. Drainger, if she could not prevent his coming, could at least hold Emily dumb.

"It lasted some four weeks. At length—what was bound to happen—the weakest snapped. A week went by, and Charlie did not come. Emily haunted the porch in an ironic appearance of freedom. Mrs. Drainger, in some subtle way, knew that she had won, that the girl was eternally hers. Emily's face was pitifully white: she was suffering. Was it love? Or was it her passionate hatred of the prison that held her, the guardian that kept her helpless?

"Then one evening, Charlie came up the street. He looked unwell, as though the contest of wills had somehow broken him. He walked straight to the porch were Emily sat. She rose to meet him—I think she was trembling.

"Good-bye," he said, and held out his hand.

"Apparently she did not ask why he had failed her, or where he was going, or how he came so abruptly to bid her farewell. She took his hand for a moment, and, with the other, steadied herself against the chair, and so they stood looking at each other. There must have been queer lights in their eyes—desire baffled in some strange way, wounded pride, and an eating, mortal sickness. Charlie's hand dropped, he ran down the walk, crossed the street straight toward me so that I saw his white face, and walked away. We never saw him again. Emily stood watching him, perhaps hoping that he would look back. If he did there was still a possibility. But he did not, and she heard, I suppose, the iron gates clang to. She went abruptly into the house. An hour later I saw her go out, and after an interval, return."

V

THE story lay between us like a damp mist.

Fawcett seemed to have forgotten me, but my silence clung to him with mute tenacity.

"What I should know," his voice rumbled on, "I don't know—that is, of course, the scene between the two afterwards. When Emily Drainger returned to her house that night something awful happened. What it was, she alone now knows. But the next flash I had of their history came three or four years later—when I had taken up my father's practice after his death. I have said the Draingers were an inheritance; he had been called in to see Mrs. Drainger several times and on those times had seen what I saw later, but I had been away. I could not question him and he was, above everything, scrupulously exact in keeping the confidences of his patients—even with me. At any rate, I was called in to see Mrs. Drainger as my father's son. I saw for the first time that her face was entirely shrouded in the thick black veil she wore ever after; and the wearing of that veil dates, I think, from the night that Charlie Brede and Emily Drainger looked with baffled wonder into each other's eyes.

"Imagine living with the thing. Imagine the torture of patience, the fixity of will required to keep it eternally on. Do you know how bandages feel after a time? Think of shrouding your head for twenty years. But think also of the slow stealthiness with which the mute reproach of that shrouded face would creep into your nerves if you had to live with it; think of the imaginative persistency which saw, in this covering of the features, not merely just the tie that would hold Emily to her forever, but the tedious process of revenge for an injury not known to us, for some monstrous moment between the two that only the dull walls of the house could hear.

Think, too, of the ingenuity of that symbol. Its very helplessness forbade to Emily the exultation of revilement. Good Heavens! It is bad enough to be tied by your own weakness to a face that you hate, but to be chained forever to that thing, to rise up with it and lie down with it, to talk to it, to insult it, to listen to it, and yet never see your sarcasms strike home! Think of hating a black veil for twenty years!

"Emily, of course, had changed. She met me at the door as she met you. She was a shell burned out by one fierce moment of fire. Something had toppled in her and collapsed, and only by the pitiless and continual irony of her silence could she hide her inward loathing. With me she was proud and acid, but in her mother's room, whither she led me, her silence was like a frightened, defensive covering which might, at any moment, be stripped from her, leaving her indecently, almost physically bare. Her pride, in sum, was broken, but not her hatred. That smouldered where before it had flamed.

"Mrs. Drainger had some minor complaint, I have forgotten what. Emily followed me into the room where she sat—she seems to me always to have been sitting with patient intensity in some corner of that house. I recall

the stab of surprise with which I searched the shadowy room for the austere and beautiful face of the Mrs. Drainger we knew, and how, in my confusion, I could see nothing but her hands. Emily mocked me with her eyes, but did not speak. Then I saw.

"I remember I asked Mrs. Drainger, for some reason, to remove the veil. I was raw in those days. Emily stiffened behind me and, I thought, started to speak, but the rigid silence of Mrs. Drainger was never broken. Her very speechlessness rebuked me. I prescribed for her and got out of the house.

"If you will believe me, Gillingham," Fawcett went on with a change of voice, "I have visited that house for twenty years and during that time Mrs. Drainger, so far as I know, has never divested herself of her veil. I got that much out of Emily. But I could get no more. She seemed to freeze when I sought after reasons. I do not know what she had done, but I do know that the wearing of that black mantle represented to them that flaming crisis in their relationship when Emily lost forever her one hope of escape.

"I have watched them for twenty years. Twenty years—think of it! They were like two granite rocks, clashed once together, and thereafter frozen into immobility. They have never changed. All pretence of affection had dropped from them—even before me. There was only naked hate. Year after weary year, seeing no one, never going anywhere, they have rasped and worn each other merely by being what they are.

And now the ultimate ingenuity, the last refinement of unhappiness! The veil, I say, is a symbol of their shuddering cohesion which death would normally destroy. But the will of this woman, as it triumphed over life, she has made to triumph over death: if Emily removes the veil she becomes, with her lack of training, her useless equipment, a helpless beggar; if she does not remove it, if she never sees her mother's face, she will be tormented by memory, bound forever, as she was in life, to a blank and inscrutable shawl. Is it forgiveness—or justice, mercy or revenge?"

Fawcett broke off as a swirl of guests flooded the coolness of the porch.

"I will tell you what happens," I said when I could.

"Do," he returned. "And you must take precautions."

VI

On my way to the office next morning, it suddenly dawned on me what Fawcett meant. How, in truth, was I to ascertain whether the singular provision of Mrs. Drainger's will had or had not been met? Fawcett had not, he said, been present at the death; and even if he had been, there must elapse a considerable time in which Emily would necessarily be alone with her mother's body.

The more I pondered, the more puzzled I grew. It seemed grotesque that Mrs. Drainger should have overlooked this situation. Moreover, I was naturally curious. Fawcett's narrative justified me in all I had thought, but it had not given a motive for the veil, nor for the tenacity with which Mrs. Drainger clung to it.

The house looked unchanged as I turned into the street on which it faced. Death was, it said, of so little consequence to the walls which had immured and conquered life itself. There was in the very lack of change a great irony. A barren device of crêpe on the door, one lower window partly open—that was all. The very papers yellowing before the door had not been swept away.

Mrs. Mueller, the woman who had witnessed the signing of the will, was standing on the steps that led to the street. If my relations with the Draingers had been odd, they were to conclude as strangely. The woman was apparently expecting me, and her manner testified to recent terror.

"What do you want?" I asked.

"*She* told me," Mrs. Mueller said, "to get you."

Her hunted look and the solemn glance she gave me testified that *she* was as real to her as though Mrs. Drainger had not for twenty-four hours been dead. "She told me if a certain thing happened I was to call you."

Suddenly I saw. That tremendous woman was reaching at me over the very boundaries of life.

"I don't like it," continued Mrs. Mueller with an indescribable accent of fear and a sidelong look at me for support. "I don't like it. But she said the day before she died, she said, 'if Miss Emily uncovers my face when I am dead, you are to tell Mr. Gillingham,' she said. And she made me promise to watch."

She seemed to want to tell me something she could not put in words.

"It is terrible," she went on in a vague, haunted manner, "what I saw."

"What?"

"She was always a queer woman. 'If Miss Emily uncovers my face,' she said, 'you are to call Mr. Gillingham,' And she made me watch. I didn't want to. So when she died I came right over."

"How did you know when to come?"

"I don't know," she answered helplessly. "I just came. She told me Miss Emily wasn't to see me, but I was to watch. It is terrible."

We were at the door. I had a sudden distaste for the woman, though she was quite simply honest, and, as it were, the helpless and unconscious spy that Mrs. Drainger, in her grave, had set upon her daughter. I was anxious to get it over with.

"You will see," she said again and brought me into the house.

Her terror was beginning to affect me. She was quite unable to tell me what she had seen, but her whole manner expressed a dazed horror, not so much of some concrete fear as of the ghastly position in which she found herself.

She led me to the door of the room in which I had last seen Mrs. Drainger alive, but no inducement could make her come in, nor could I get from her anything more explicit. Poor soul! I do not wonder at her terror.

The room was as before. The shuttered windows admitted only faint bars and pencils of light. The dim chairs and shadowy tables were discernible, but, as if they yielded precedence to death, the most solid object in the obscurity was the coffin in which Mrs. Drainger's body lay. I advanced to it. The mistress of this ill-fated mansion seemed to have grown larger in death; her body was no longer shrunken and her folded hands still retained faintly their peculiar luminous quality. I could see in the shadow that around her face there was no longer the black mantle, but the face puzzled me—I could not make it out, and, opening the shutter, I let in the light.

I stepped again to the side of the coffin. Could this be the queenly beauty of whom Fawcett had spoken? For, where the features should have been there was, naked to the light, only a shapeless, contorted mass of flesh in which, the twisted eyelids being closed, there seemed to my horrified gaze no decent trace of human resemblance!

I turned half-sick from the sight. Emily Drainger, tall, pallid, yellow, her great eyes burning with an evil glow, her lemon dress an unhealthy splotch in the doorway, stood regarding me.

"The will—the will!" she cried. "She thought she could stop me, but she could not!"

"Who—what has done this?" I pointed involuntarily to her mother's face.

She seemed to expand before my eyes with evil triumph.

"I—*I*," she cried at length, her black eyes holding me as I stood, weak and faint, clinging unconsciously to the coffin for support. "*Twenty years ago!* But"—she laughed hysterically and came to look at the shapeless, brutalized face—"I never knew, until she died, that it was done so well!!"

INTIMACY

By Patience Trask

HE is a little man and his hair is coming out rapidly. He rubs tonic into it every night when he can remember it. The tonic stains the linen pillow-slips, but it seems to help his hair so that really doesn't matter.

He looks healthy enough but he has to be particular about what he eats. He won't eat lamb or mutton and oughtn't to eat much beef, though he dotes on steaks and it is hard to keep him from having them.

He can't wear socks that have been darned and his right foot is sensitive, a touch of rheumatism or gout, perhaps. He won't go to a doctor about it.

He used to busy himself collecting odd and rare books and had a couple of first editions. The last few years, though, he doesn't read anything but the daily papers, though he likes to pretend he keeps up with everything and is put out if he can't pretend he knows something about every new book and author.

He is stingy about little bills, but, after he has made a lot of money, suddenly, he has bursts of generosity and buys unnecessarily hideous and expensive things for his home.

His people are rather ordinary, especially his father, who chews tobacco even when visiting relatives. His only sister is an old maid and rather a busybody.

He snores when sleeping on his back and is annoyed when awakened and told about it.

I do not know him myself. But once in a while his wife sits next to me when I am rolling bandages for the Red Cross. . . . As for the husband of the woman who sat, yesterday, at my left. . . .

NOWHERE has man shown his shrewdness more clearly than by the fact that only one beautiful woman in a hundred ever marries well.

THERE are two classes of married women: those who are suspicious and have good cause, and those who are suspicious anyhow.

THE oaths that a man takes when marrying for the first time are always carried out to the letter—with his second wife.

CLARICE GOES TO SEED

By Jeremy Lane

I

THINGS were running well. All the little lines pulled smoothly, and there was velvet on two sides. Good food and drink down in the main dining room, cocktails and liqueurs in the Ladies' Grill, and the night-clerk had sent up a fresh five hundred Shepheard's Clubs in the way of cigarettes—so Clarice was well nested. The taxi credit man hadn't called for a week, and she would be able nicely to satisfy him. The suite was paid for—far into the future—three weeks or so. The chamois-coloured maid had just departed, properly tipped, after renewing her interest in Clarice's pink-tapering fingers, and the ensemble of corn-coloured hair, delicate cheeks, eyes like summer fiction, and exquisitely turned chin. Clarice had a perfect throat, a perfect body, and tripled this perfection in the taste with which she clothed or did not clothe the same. Also consonant with this twin-six state of life were unlimited passes for a chain of exclusive summer parks, extensive credit arrangements about town, a case of Cliquot 1906 from Stubby, now in the cellars of the hotel awaiting her wish, and several hundred in freshly ironed Federal Reserve currency.

It was eleven o'clock and, as she waited for breakfast to be brought up, Clarice lounged upon the Persian dais, and thought over everything, chiefly how long it had taken to round up all this and get it working.

She recalled the automobile lottery game, and smiled faintly to remember how eager are the rich to get much for little. They bit hard. It had been a good clean-up. Stubby Taggart had a head on him, even if he insisted on topping it with a brown derby to match his tie. Then, there had been the race-track subscription fund, to build and operate a trotting park in Illinois under the auspices of the Belgian Warphanage and in the interests of that kindly but fictitious organization of war relief. This got around the anti-racing laws of the state, and Clarice recalled how thirty-one of the most prosperous crooks of the East and the West sent in their cheques to back this future goldmine, that they might get in with their own snakes. She had not forgotten Stubby's precaution in having every cheque certified first, nor her own share in the soliciting. The crooks bit hard, too—were still biting. A similar case was the Edgeleaf County Sunday School Song Book Campaign, now ancient history, having netted a plenty.

Clarice had spent long dusty hours in the Public Library, memorizing enough of Hebrew language and tradition to be able to solicit Yiddishers in the matter of a family crest that would reach back to Abraham and Isaac without a blemish. For each millionaire collector of stove-lids there had been a coat of arms, of Talmudic nature, that rivalled the very shields of England, and the Hebrew lettering was far more decorative and impressive than mere Latin. How proudly the far-scattered sons of Moses penned their cheques for such distinction, strictly guaranteed! If the fair solicitor's hair had only been dark, she would have doubled the haul.

At present, a small army of talkers, remittance men, shrewd gamesters all, were operating from San Diego to Que-

bec, and from Puget Sound to Pensacola, taking their commissions and their inspiration from Clarice Munday and her lieutenant, Stub Taggart. It was the capable Stubby who raced after these near-crooks, and kept them supplied with the ripest fruit of Miss Munday's imagination. She herself had retired from the field.

Breakfast was without flavour. The coffee tasted burned, if that were possible, and the toast had sweated. The black who brought the tray, and who was asked to remove it at once, was metropolitan, well broken to morning women; but something in the lace and satin sweetness here puzzled him, was fascinating, new in his life. His eyes magnetized back to her as she left the dais and went to the deep-set window. She had spoken briefly, though in all gentleness, yet he was afraid of Clarice. From his unlettered point of view he got something which wiser men always missed, and instinctively he felt for his pocket of silver.

Like many an honest person, Miss Munday was bored with success.

The Shepheard's Clubs were smoking like Teamsters' Delight, and she tossed several into the grate. Glancing down the list of possibilities for to-day, amusements, shops, invitations, canteens, she was no better pleased. Her cheeks were quite pallid underneath, and there was no light in her blue eyes. She lapsed upon the dais again. A certain health, which would not be driven from her body, was now causing great discomfort. Every nerve beneath her silken skin cried for purity there, since all the interior sources were blinded with poison.

In the sleep-echo that came over her, she did not relax and rest. Her mind went on searching for new material, independent of her will, and she was dreamily disgusted with its results. One gemmed slipper fell to the rug, her foot grew chill, but she did not summon the energy to bend over and retrieve it. Except for perfect health, she was very ill.

Into this fragrant inordination came a telegram from Taggart, and, without rising from the Persian couch, Clarice wired back to him the money he needed. Forty minutes later, he wired again, merely returning twice the amount he had taken; and his second telegram bored Clarice more than the first.

Now she lifted her heavy eyelids, and stared at the cushion under her arm. A slow silvery light was gathering in the blue. She closed her eyes again, tightly, then re-opened them, and the light was gaining. It was an idea.

She arose and slid the gown from her shoulders. She ordered luncheon, immediately, and her voice was like a summer evening at nine. When the food came, she was dressed for the street. A cab waited for the moment of her emergence from the lobby. A travelling bag was set beside the chauffeur. As the cab rolled down to the station, Clarice studied a time-table with full concentration. Two hours later, a very trim, modish, mauve, veiled young woman descended from the afternoon train at Springwood.

II

THERE was a horse-propelled vehicle upon which was lettered "Maple Crest." This title offended Clarice, yet she allowed the driver with nickel-plated braces to take her arm and assist her in at the back of the carry-all. Her bag was slid in close to her silken ankles, and the homespun driver turned away quickly and wished he hadn't.

The drive was dusty. Clarice was the only new arrival for Maple Crest. The double row of maple trees on either side of the lane was as decent as mere maples can be, and the smell of golden-rod and rag-weed was like taking something from the doctor. But a grim cast held the girl's mouth, and the keenly focussed light in her eyes remained, even through the veil.

The room they gave her had a window, a wash-stand with crockery and fringed towels, a bed very white and fat, a clothes-closet with hooks instead

of a bath room, a cane chair, one mirror, and a rope coiled below the window-sill in the event of fire. Two dollars a day in advance, meals included if you were there to get 'em. It was all preposterous. But the blue eyes were steeled. The whiskered gentleman who took her out of the hands of the driver believed that her laugh was a sign of pleasure. He had his own ideas about the way some women dressed. He carried her fifty-dollar bill to the neighbours, and there was some talk of framing it—such a shame ever to put a crinkle in it.

"Springwood—" breathed Clarice.

III

HAVING missed supper at six o'clock, out of a new kind of timidity that amazed herself, Clarice forced herself to bed at nine, long after the lights were out elsewhere. A million gnats danced about the chimney of her kerosene lamp. Out on the lake, one lantern specked in a boat, but she did not know or care to know that they were fishing bull-heads for her breakfast. She was bitterly aware that all her Shepheard's Clubs were ninety miles away—nothing in the world mattered but that, and she couldn't have one. In a weak moment she considered padding the showcase in the dining room downstairs, and nicking out a package of Home Runs, but the steel of her will sprung in place again, and she discarded the thought as not fitting in with her big idea. So, in the yellow darkness of the lamp, she studied the jumping of her nerves, and the hours wore on.

At length, when courage had accumulated, she arose, blew out the lamp, and tried to sleep, but the bed was hot. Nothing like sleep came near. At daybreak she was softly pacing the room, meeting a real crisis. She believed she was at the point of death for a cigarette.

Also a thirst began, deep in her white throat, until by sunrise, when the bullhead catchers rowed their punt into the reeds along shore and came into the house, the girl's entire body felt charred with the dry heat that only a morning brandy could quench. Her senses cried out to send a wire to Stubby, who did not know where she was or what she was doing. He could bring relief. But the generalship that had never lost a battle was holding now against this mutiny, and the mirror registered only a frightened smile. Clarice remained steadfast.

The landlady, wife of Whiskers, came a-trembling to rap at the door and ask if she intended to come down to breakfast. In desperation, Clarice said Yes, and after a half-rub with a cold raw towel, descended the stairs to the dining room. She was introduced around, and not a man, hired or boarder, but felt the table spinning before him as she was assigned a chair and a plate.

She scalded her lips with the coffee, which went down like rusty wire. The platter of fried eggs, rather gaudy though defeated, nearly turned her against the notion of eating, yet there was something interesting about the smell of the bacon. In fact, the bacon was properly cured, salted, fried and drained. How did they happen to know such an art in this godless province? Also, the chipped and ugly pitcher contained an odd miracle of cream, rich, yellow, sweet, at least five-x.

Clarice could not forgive the driver of the bus his appetite for corn cakes, which he built into a magnificent stack before storming them on two sides with ambidexterous tools. They disappeared at a stroke, and the driver's stalwart arms worked like piston rods, eclipsing the bright buckles of his braces.

The new boarder, having been induced out of respect to her hostelry to taste one of the greasy fried eggs, had another surprise in the sweetness of the egg itself and the skill of its preparation. The seasoning was admirable. Clarice finished breakfast with the startled knowledge that she had for a while forgotten she had no cigarettes. They showed her the lake and a boat, but she confessed she knew not how to

work the oars. This boat was included in the two dollars. Bathing suits were to rent for ten cents a day, if one agreed to wash them out when through. The bargain was repellent, but determination smiled in the blue eyes. At ten o'clock that morning she went for a swim.

Cold water crept up and up, freezing her limbs under the crude wool bloomers. She believed there had never been anything so hideous as herself now. She bent forward and dabbled frightened finger-tips in the dancing surface of the lake, which rose higher by little pokes, until every nerve was possessed by the water. With a stifled gasp, Clarice plunged, head foremost, and the worst was over.

IV

WHEN the savage liquid was done trickling down her neck and palpitant bosom, and the blonde hair was taken from across her eyes, she grew aware that someone was laughing.

It was a youthful, good-natured, but utterly rude laugh, centaurian. Clarice turned. A strong young man was lying full length upon the board-pier, his eyes as mirthful as the sun-tipped ripples everywhere. For the first time since she was twelve, Clarice Munday's cheeks grew pink without aid.

"Brave work," said the observant young man.

"You're wonderfully helpful," said Clarice, finding her natural breath again.

"Oh, come now—free country—" he remonstrated, and then laughed again as if he enjoyed it.

"I'll bet you came for the rest cure—and can't rest," said the handsome rudeness.

Clarice swore softly at his penetration, and nearly forgot she was standing in four feet of lake water. He was saying:

"Wonderful—" rather softly to himself, and there was nothing of the provinces in his tone, or in his eyes. He was a promising young man—one to whom personal liberties are but courtesy.

Clarice realized that her difficulty was his clothes—the need of them at present. If she had seen him dressed for street instead of to swim, she could have placed him without hesitation. Now, with himself just more or less as he was, rather good in a swimming suit of yellow wool and stripes, she was at sea, and could not get her range. Talking made it worse, for he was no farmer. She glanced down nervously at herself. Only the fullest and surest beauty of woman could survive the suit she had rented, especially when soaked. It bound her arms and lay in a heavy gaping wrinkle across one shoulder. The young man on the pier was rousing himself. After placing his cigarette on the edge of the boards, he dropped into the water.

"Permit me," he said, wading for her.

"They said this was a sandy shore," remarked Clarice, "but it feels like the clay baths at Eastoria."

"So it does. When were you there last?"

She stared at him, and could not be sure that his smile was disrespectful. His hair was neat, as if no amount of swimming could spoil it—something very quiet and easy about him. He was twenty-four.

"Does it matter when I was there last?" asked Clarice, less than sorry he had left the pier.

"Beg pardon. All my fault," said he. "Some people are touchy about that. They need the mud for such a variety of causes—yes?"

"You're unpardonable," said Clarice. "This water is turning me to stone."

"Shall we indulge," he asked, smiling in a deprecative way, "in the old summer-girl stuff of teaching loveliness how to swim?"

Clarice now looked closer. "You're older than I thought. Go ahead. Let's get it over."

He ducked her again, and she was furious, but their conversation went on without the present tense.

"Why didn't you go to the Eastoria baths this time?" he inquired pleasantly.

"I wanted to get down among the seeds," she replied, and he did not take it to heart.

"Ah, you found quite a pod-ful—yes?"

After her silence, he began anew: "Did you bring your knitting?"

"No, this is a vacation, the first in a long while—"

"At last you're telling the truth—part of it. You couldn't do that at Eastoria."

Following a prolonged flounder below the surface, Clarice used the first breath that came: "Why Eastoria? You seem all wrapped up in the place—"

"Yes, I went down there in the interests of the warphans—Belgian Warphanage, you know. They're building a racing park, and I was selling stock to some of the guests—the mud-bathers—they can afford that sort of thing—yes?"

Clarice trembled violently. "I'm going in," she said.

V

His name was Alward. Clarice needed the remainder of that day to make sure that he did not know her, and that he did not imagine his swimming pupil to be the originator of the Belgian Warphanage graft. Stubby had probably sent Alward to Eastoria, to handle the wealth that came there to be oozed through the curative mud.

Throughout that afternoon, Clarice moved about Maple Crest, avoiding Alward, avoiding herself. A deep slow-going seaworthy thirst was racking her, and her lips pinched thin at the thought of a smoke. Whenever Alward came up to her, the aroma of his cigarette made her most unhappy. She became haunted by the idea of getting away from the place, back to the city. The portals of the Straight and Narrow seemed to grow more terrifying.

When the bus was ready to meet the late afternoon train in the village of Springwood, Clarice very nearly placed herself in the keeping of him who did the corn-cake disappearing act. But the bus rolled away down maple lane without her.

She disliked Alward, also, for being such a prude that he could not ask her to accept a cigarette. He did not dream that she would. His talk was cheerful, his presence rather all right, for he had a way with him. All of Stub Taggart's choices had a way with them—nicely groomed, winning.

It began to bother Clarice, to think of this child as he must have been at Eastoria, selling faked interests to those who would attempt to fake up further interests for themselves, at public expense. She did not enjoy the thought. Alward was an ideal gamester—not that. But she began to draw a distinction between herself and him. It was different for her. She had been at it so long—of course there had been moments of innocence in girlhood, but she was now nearly twenty-seven. And Alward—at heart such a decent lad. Clarice felt everything going better and worse than before.

Grimly she held to her purpose, ate the food that appeared on the common table, and whenever it was time for guests to walk, bathe, play tennis, congregate or sleep, was obedient to the customs of Maple Crest. Alward presented her with a true bathing suit, something of bright silk that would never impede motion. It was more like living to wear it, even though the water itself was but tardy in its friendliness.

The second day she was ill in her room, without interruption. Alward paced the grounds and endeavoured to fish. The third she came forth, and the ache that came from abstinence was somewhat dulled, more bearable. Her cheeks were taut. On the fourth, she received lessons again in the water, and during that afternoon forced herself to attempt tennis with him. He laughed at her, but did it so joyously that no one

could hate him for it. She had not held a racquet for ten years. Her muscles quirked and murmured. Not all at once did her grace show through. Alward was the first to cry out, quite soberly, when she finally found the flying ball, that she was lovely, lovely.

There was a form of satisfaction in thinking of poor Stubby, who must be a frantic man, not knowing what had become of her. His urgent wires would go unheeded. He would come in from the field. He would rave, and his brown derby grow hot.

On the sixth day, Clarice actually partook of the three meals included in the two dollars per, and did so because she was hungry. She had a standing joke with the bus driver, and he had lost some of his fear of her ankles. He could look in her face now, across the table, without a blush and without losing a bite. Whiskers had at last been able to change her fifty. Clarice could not swim a stroke, but the water no longer made her angry. In fact, she did not wait for it to crawl up over her, but shoved ahead and splashed, and, on the day which marked her first week at Maple Crest, she threw up her arms to the shining heavens, and laughed with pleasure.

This was a winning game at last. She paid for another week and was pleased with herself. It was surprising that these seeds could be so friendly. On professional principles, it hurt the girl to think she had misjudged them all her life. She had reason to doubt the finality of her own mind. The Missus was showing her how to knit, and this was a relief when the tennis muscles cried for it. Colour was appearing on her cheeks where it had never been before, not so daring in effect perhaps, nor so fascinating to others, but much more interesting to Clarice herself. On the eighth day, she lost a proud battle against sun-tan, and yielded to its healthy tyranny.

The ninth morning she waked early and went out upon the lawn at five o'clock—almost as early as Whiskers and the Missus. Birds do something different up to that hour of the day. Clarice realized it for the first time. She breathed deeply of the unfiltered air, and her lungs caught a delirious satisfaction from it. Her body gained new heights, every emotion keeping pace. She could ask nothing further from the world.

Praying never to lose the joy of it all, having forgotten the cost endured, she ran to her room and donned the bright bathing suit. It was nearly a duplicate of the yellow one worn by the giver of the gift—quite possible to swim in it without sinking, as one must, and should, have done in the rented bloomers. Clarice proceeded quite fleetly down to the water-side. No one else was in. She had wished for the opportunity—this semi-privacy. Accepting it, with a laugh in her throat, she ran out the pier, leapt upon the end of the diving board, and flung through the air as swimmers do head foremost into the water. That glorious moment might live forever. The past, sleek, golden, lifeless, was all baptized away. The water hissed musically about her ears, softly roaring until she came up. Coolly remembering instructions, she began to put them into practice. Unfold the body—at the moment you straighten the legs—just so.

The directions were doubtless perfect, but needed much of industry. Clarice could not swim. She was going down. But Alward was there. From nowhere, he came up beside her, in his tennis clothes, his hair neatly combed. He did not scold, but there was a look of horror in his eyes. She gulped, and felt his hand under her arm. He did not tow her all the way to shore. There was no excitement. He let her down when her toes could touch bottom, and led her shoreward. In about four feet of water, he stood close facing her, and said:

"Clarice, my darling—yes?"

It was all in that. Clarice was plunged into a consternation she could not fathom. She wished he had let her go down. Alward was in love with her—everything spoiled!

Next day she thanked him again, and explained that she was called back to the city. She was so cynical that he could not miss it, but he felt the necessity of speaking his heart outright, leaving the future up to her. She told him there was no future, that she had come to find one, etc. He laughed again, but the sound was nerveless. He was down, and said so. But Clarice rode in the bus, and bade good-bye to her corn-cake artist with the bright braces.

VI

In the suite, with the city noises grinding far below, Stub Taggart sat near the Persian dais and listened to the most astonishing story of his life. Clarice was speaking, and he knew better than to interrupt, even when her words came most leisurely.

"Now, Stub, you're going to Maple Crest this afternoon and get hold of this Alward. When you're with him, you don't know me—never heard of me. You're going to call him off. He's not like us. You used to be like him. Someday he will be like you, unless you steer him off right now. If it takes me fifty years, I'm going to get into his class. After you straighten him out, find him a white man's job somewhere. Then come back here, and you'll find my new address with the clerk. If you want to come along, and lay down on the graft for the rest of your days, all right—welcome home. I'm going to find another place like Maple Crest, only without any Alwards. I've got a new toaster, and it wants little farm sausages, hand-made, and real bread and butter, all for two dollars a day, and green tea is plenty kick. Now I'm getting anxious for another chance in my nice bathing suit. I've got to get a train. Just tell the others that I've gone to seed. I'm out of it, by God! I've found another game."

Stubby stared hard.

"Well—yes or no—?"

"Say, Clarice, when you picked a game and said it was a winner, did I ever balk?"

CAST THY BREAD UPON THE WATERS

By John F. Lord

SHE always greeted him pleasantly when she entered the elevator. Sometimes she spoke words of encouragement. He was but a simple elevator lad and yet he was not immune to kindness. He resolved to be pleasant in return.

He greeted her warmly the next morning.

"Hullo kid," he said.

She had him discharged.

EVERY woman has an inexhaustible supply of kisses. The supply of thieves is not equal to the demand.

A WOMAN with fifteen admirers must be accomplished; a man, foolish.

YOUR LETTER

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

On Getting It

I HAVE just read your letter to me.
I can see your fingers as you draw the letters.
You do not write them, as do ordinary people who write.
You draw out each letter.
Each letter is you.
As I see them I feel that you are still drawing them.
You are near to me.
The past and the present are merged.
I can almost touch your hand as it guides the pen.
Your letters are more personal that your presence.
As I read them I pull aside the curtains.
I am myself with you.

II

On Answering It

The paper lies blank before me.
I cannot write.
Everything I would say is incomplete, impossible.
How do I know the mood of you when you open the envelope?
I am so self-conscious that I am marking up the grey paper
With little drawings of your profile.
I do not want to write to you.
My thoughts will not say themselves.
I cannot force myself to write nothings.
I do not dare to write what I want to.
I can only be colourless like the paper.
You are never so far away as when I write to you.

A FEW words mumbled by a minister constitute a marriage. A few words mumbled by a sleeping husband constitute a divorce.

KISSING a wife is like dining in your own restaurant.

THE GUMP

By Florence Ryerson

I

STANLEY GRANT could not have told when he began to notice the girl. She first stole into his consciousness in the form of a vague irritation, an intense desire to pass hurriedly through the crowded ante-room into his inner office, or, avoiding it altogether, to enter his sanctum by a rear door. He had never regarded her closely to his knowledge, and yet, at odd moments, when he was smoothing a ruffled star, or attending rehearsal, little lantern slides of her face would slip into his mind.

At first it was purely subconscious, a matter of the inner eye, but later it became almost an obsession. The picture of her sitting there in her chair by the door, her awkward feet sprawled out, her lumpy shoulders leaning wearily against the uncomfortable wooden surface, would rise before his eyes, and frowning slightly, he would go back to the matter in hand with a distinct effort. It seemed to him that she had been there for ever, that she would go on to eternity still humping over in that awkward, slovenly way.

He rang the bell by his desk.

Horton, his secretary, came from the outer office and stood regarding him.

Grant spoke crisply.

"Who's that girl out there? The one that's been holding down a chair for weeks."

"You mean the Gump?" said Horton. "They call her that out there," he added in explanation.

"Who is she?" repeated Grant.

"Her name's Ethelyn Allen," said Horton. "She's got it all printed out on a piece of cardboard."

His levity jarred on Grant.

"What does she want?" he asked.

"What they all want. To go on the stage under your management."

Grant threw up his hands.

"Great Scott! Why don't you explain to her that there isn't any hope?"

Horton shook his head.

"I have," he said, "I've told her in every language but Chinese. Jackson's tried it too, and Griswold. Even the girls have taken a hand, but she doesn't seem to care. Just stares at the door and says she's waiting to see you—that you'll understand.

He looked down and flushed, almost embarrassed. "I can't throw her out, Mr. Grant. She looks as though the only other place she's got to sit is a park bench. It's too much like kicking a sick dog."

Grant nodded.

"All right," he said. "Let her alone. She'll get tired of waiting after a while. Have you 'phoned Doris Grey about the change in the 'Widow's Mite'?"

Five minutes later he was deep in a pile of new plays.

But the girl still kept appearing in the outer office and she grew more and more into Grant's thoughts. He found himself wondering when he was in the intricacies of rehearsal whether she was still sitting against the wall waiting. Whether the chair where she sat was as uncomfortable as it looked. Hang it all—he must get some new chairs for the office, with padded seats. He caught himself up sternly and went on with the business in hand.

Three days later he entered his outer

office just to make sure she was still there. She sat as he had last seen her, except that the weary slump of her shoulders was even more pronounced and her clothes more shabby and worn. There were others in the room, but she seemed oblivious to her surroundings and stared blankly and without the flicker of an eyelash at the inner door marked "Private."

Stanley Grant's entrance was the signal for a general onrush and he was obliged to throw off twenty pairs of manicured and highly scented hands stretched forth to detain him, but the girl by the door did not move. She merely looked at him and in her eyes he saw a look which unaccountably made him want to put his head down and howl as he had howled at the age of four when his puppy had been run over by a waggon in the street. The phrase of Horton's about kicking a sick dog returned to his mind as he gained the rear door and passed through the busy offices to his inner room. Ten minutes later he rang his bell.

"Send that girl in," he told Horton. "The one with the sea-sick hair."

"You mean the Gump?" asked Horton in genuine surprise.

Grant nodded.

"I want to get rid of her," he said. "She—there's no use her wasting her time here."

Horton stood at the door, half hesitating.

"You won't be too hard on her, will you, Mr. Grant?" he said. "She's got us all going out there."

"I won't be harsh," he promised. "But I'll be darned firm."

II

A MINUTE later he glanced up.

Horton was at the door and behind him stood the girl. She was wriggling her shoulders nervously and twisting a soiled white glove in her hands. He motioned her to a chair and nodded Horton out of the room. Then he turned and surveyed her more at his ease. He was surprised to find that she was even worse than he remembered her.

Her face seemed to have been thrown together by a careless workman from the scraps and left-over things in a slovenly shop. It was not even a comedy face. The mouth was too small—a rosebud mouth, overhung by a large and pendulous nose. The chin retreated weakly into a thin and stringy neck. And over her high forehead hung wisps of horrible, dead-looking hair, the unmistakable green-yellow result of peroxided years. Under the tangled, ratted bank of hair tortured, deep sunken eyes of glassy blue looked out at him. Her mouth was working now, as she looked about the room. And suddenly her head went down on one lean arm, her thin shoulders shaking.

Unaccountably Grant's hand went out.

"What is it?" he said gently. "Is there anything I can do?"

She looked up dully and he saw that the only crowning ghastliness possible to such a face was the result of tears.

"You can give me a part," she said.

He drew back.

"I—I am afraid there is no part fitted to you in any of our productions," the formula coming easily to his lips after long years of usage.

"I know. There's no part anywhere fitted to me, I guess. Not the way I am now." Her voice had the awful deadness of complete despair, "But I wanted to hear you say it before I gave up. You see, the last time I was here—"

"The last time?" he puzzled. "I—I don't believe I remember you."

The girl stood up suddenly. She was dressed in a dreadful thing of greenish mustard cloth that heightened the dead effect of her hair. It was hung with buttons and braid and here and there a bit of tarnished metal embroidery still held its own. From a limp and pendulous pocket she drew a flat bit of cardboard and held it out to him.

"I looked like that, then," she said. "You had the picture taken yourself.

I was playing in *A Woman's Idea*—the kid part."

Grant took the picture and stared at it. He remembered it all now, would have remembered even if the picture with its baby face and fluff of curls had not brought it back vividly to his mind. The mother had brought her here in this very starched white dress with the slimpsy blue ribbons.

"I remember," he said. "And your mother—"

"Dead," she told him dully. "Thank God."

"What happened?" he inquired, quite simply. "I thought you had a future then."

She looked at him over the desk and a hatred of the universe flamed in her face.

"What happened?" she said. "Why, I grew up."

"You couldn't stay a child for ever," he told her.

"No," she said, "but did I have to grow up into *this?*"

She swung about, her lumpy shoulders showing through the shoddy cloth of her suit.

"Look at me!" she cried.

She snatched the picture from him and regarded it hungrily.

"I was a little beauty. You said so yourself. You thought I was so young I wouldn't understand. But I wasn't five like Mom told you. I was eight, and at eight I knew enough for twelve. But she stunted me with whiskey and the late hours kept me small. It wasn't until later I began to grow."

Suddenly Grant touched the bell at his elbow and, to Horton who opened the door, he gave an order.

"I shall be busy for a time," he said. "I don't wish to be disturbed."

And then, as the door closed behind his secretary he turned again. The impulse was inexplicable, but it was unmistakably the same that had made him pick up a crushed puppy thirty years ago and hug it to his breast.

"Tell me about it," he said.

She returned to the chair, her awkward limbs sprawling as she sank down.

"There ain't much to tell," she answered. "I left you for Burton. He gave Mom a bigger price."

"I remember," he nodded. "You played in *The Little Heiress*. I was watching because I thought to use you the next year, but when I dropped in to see, you were too large for the part."

She agreed bitterly.

"It was then I began to grow. At first it was just a little, then I shot up like a weed—one of the stringy kind. Mom hid it for a time with frills, but after awhile—" She shrugged her shoulders despairingly. "Then we went home and rested."

"Home?" said Grant questioningly.

"A little jay town upstate," she answered. "Mom came from there and she used to tote me out to sing and dance at every church sociable. That's how she came to put me on the stage. After that she bragged o' course, and sent clippings home when I made a good part. We went back there to rest and she done a lot more bragging. Told 'em how you said I had a big future before me, an' all that. I wasn't well just then, she told 'em, and you'd ordered two years' rest for me before I went back under your management again. She died lyin' like that."

She stopped and pushed a strand of frowzled hair from her eyes. Grant looked at her with quick sympathy and she caught the look.

"Oh, you needn't be sorry," she told him. "What happened afterwards would have killed her anyway. Even before she died I was pretty big and sort of lumpy. But she didn't see it, I guess. Just told the town I was going to be powerfully built, like Dusé. I don't believe she'd ever seen the Dusé person act, but she'd read somewhere all about how she was the world's greatest actress and how she'd left the stage right at the height of her art. And she made up about her bein' big and rawboned until she really thought it herself. An' the town swallowed it."

She laughed harshly.

"I used to act in all the town entertainments and do the death scene from

Romeo and Juliet, and *Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night*, and a piece about a mother and her dying child, and say—I just about ran that town!"

For a moment her face glowed, and then slowly the light died out. "An' there was Sam Newberry."

Grant, regarding her, started slightly. Was it possible, he wondered, that this lank and towsled thing before him cherished the memory of a love affair? She was speaking, almost tenderly, her voice breaking at the end of the sentences in a queer effect of shyness.

"He used to play Romeo in the play. His father owned the biggest livery stable in town, an' he thought I was almost as great as Sarah Bernhardt, I guess. He—he wanted to marry me. But in those days I thought I was going to hit the high spots and I turned him down to go on with my career."

She emphasized the last word with the accumulated bitterness of years.

"You came to town again?" said Grant.

"After Mom died. I was eighteen then, and like you see me now. The night work and whiskey when I was a kid hadn't helped any, I guess, and the grease paint had made my skin bad before I was ten. Then Mom'd done something to my hair for years—I didn't know it until she died, and it began coming out something awful. I came here and the man at your door wouldn't let me in. So I went to the other managers, just to get even, and they'd look at me and laugh. But I had to go on because—well, because after what I'd written home I couldn't go back.

"You see, I'd started out tellin' 'em you had a part all waiting for me, just like Mom did, and when you turned me down I didn't dare write 'em. So I went on lyin' and lyin' and when I got a part in a three-a-day vaudeville troupe I made it sound like a headline performance."

The tortured eyes narrowed slowly.

"I been doin' that for three years now," she went on. "At first it was easy because it was such a little place; no first class shows went there, but since the factory's come an' the summer colony, they've opened two theatres and the larger troupes stop there overnight. They're beginnin' to ask why I don't never come through, and Sam—he wants to know—"

Her voice broke.

"He wants me to come back, but I can't go like this. I got to make good an' show 'em before I go. An' I *can* act. I don't care how I look, I can *act*. I've been practisin' an' practisin' by myself until I know all the great parts like Camille and Juliet."

She leaned over the desk toward him, an awful earnestness in her eyes.

"So I come to you. I thought I'd give it one chance before—before—"

Her voice trailed off and her hands clenched. There was no doubt in Grant's mind what she meant. He looked at her, a great pity in his eyes. Perhaps it would be kinder so. Then, somehow, the picture of the puppy came back into his mind. They had shot the puppy and it had lain there, its head bleeding. He shuddered suddenly and spoke.

"I—I might let you try for a part," he said unexpectedly. "There's one you might possibly fit."

The flare of hope that surged in her face almost frightened him.

"A part for me? You can't mean it!" she exclaimed, her nervous fingers twisting before her flat breast. "An honest to God part with *lines?*"

He nodded brusquely.

"It's not much," he warned. "Only a scene, but it's with the lead and rather important. Of course it's only a try-out, you understand."

She rose suddenly and reached out toward him.

"Give it to me!" she cried. "I want to see it! I want to feel it!"

Grant rummaged in a drawer, then brought out a slender sheaf of paper.

"Take it," he said, and turned away unable to bear the terrible look she turned upon the typewritten lines.

Later he sat at his desk, not exactly regretting his Quixotic impulse, but

sternly suppressing the odd feeling of exhilaration it had given him. If it were fiction, he ruminated, she would probably prove to be a genius and the audience would rise as one and acclaim her great. But he had, after twenty years of intensive study, never met with that kind of success. The audiences he had known were too prone to demand a pound of beauty with every ounce of brains. And those few who slipped by without beauty had at least a subtle charm—irregular perhaps—but the picture of Ethelyn rose in his mind's eye, devoid of every kind of grace, and he groaned as he went back to his work. She was just—a Gump.

III

HALF an hour later he was trying to explain his impulse to Doris Grey. She was perched on the edge of his desk, one slender foot swinging, her firm, capable hand steadying her body by the arm of his chair.

"She's awful," he admitted, "and she'll probably gum up the show. But if you'd seen her—"

Doris grinned cheerfully.

"At it again," she told him. "You're always bitten once every season and you were about due to get it now. Well, *I* don't blame you. Those down-and-outers always get on my nerves, and I'll do my best to help out, but Cuthbert—" she giggled suddenly, "and her scene is with him too."

Something in her tone made Grant glance up suddenly. Cuthbert was her name for Ronald Duchamp, her leading man.

"How's he gettin' along?" he asked. "I haven't been down to the last two rehearsals."

She regarded him with a gleam in her level grey eyes.

"Stan," she said, "how long have I been with you?"

"Ten years," he answered. "Why do you ask?"

"In all that time have I ever gotten out my little scalping knife?"

"No," he said, grinning. "But you have a way of getting 'em if you really want to."

She nodded.

"Well, Cuthbert is going to be added to the list," she informed him. "He—he's getting a little too much."

"I'm sorry to have inflicted him on you," he told her. "But men are hard to get this year, you know, and I've an idea he can act."

"You've a lot to unlearn," she told him darkly. "But I say no more or you'll be laying it to professional jealousy. Only, when the show's been on a bit and he's out from under your eye, just slip upstate and take a look at him unbeknownst, will you?"

He nodded.

"Just let me know when you want me," he told her and, as she reached the door, "I'll be up to-night to introduce the new star."

She chuckled.

"I'm dying to hear Levy roar. He's said everything the law allows about Cuthbert, and when this hits him—poor old Uncle Dave!"

IV

GRANT went to the theatre early that evening, but the Gump was before him. She was standing outside the door, surveying the door man with smouldering eyes. As Grant approached she met him with a sort of timid familiarity that grated on his nerves.

"Good-evening, Chief!" she said. "This lummox won't let me in to rehearse. You might just explain that I'm one o' the cast."

Grant nodded curtly to the gatekeeper.

"Miss Allen is to be admitted," he said, and tried not to read the look in the man's eyes. Together they entered the door and wandered through the tangle of scenery on to the empty stage where a few lights were burning. The cast was out for dinner.

Ethelyn crossed before the footlights and stood there a minute, outlined in the subdued glare. Grant noted that her slouch was gone and when

she spoke her voice held a triumphant ring.

"Gee, it's good t' get back on the boards again!" she told him. It was quite evident that all the self-confidence that the heavy years had knocked out of her was returning. "And it's a peach of a part. I've been rehearsing it in my room. Especially the scene with the lead. It's a grand scene. I don't know how I can ever thank you," she exclaimed to the silent Grant, "except by making the hit of the show," she giggled archly. "I'm going to. I kin feel it. All I needed was a chance, just a little chance to show what I could do."

Grant shuddered a trifle. Her hopeless humility had been bad enough, but this— However, he reflected, it was quite in character. He had not been coaxing his marionettes through countless productions for twenty years without learning that.

There was the sound of voices and the others returned, chattering as they came. Doris Grey led the procession, a large wedge of pie in her hand. She waved it at Grant gaily.

"Uncle Dave pulled us away before we were done, she said, and then stopped for another pickle. I told him he'd get what was coming to him when he reached here."

Her eye roved and she sank her voice. "Where's the Gump?"

Grant waved his hand silently.

Ethelyn was coming toward them from across the stage, one of her bony hands extended in a high hand shake.

"This is Miss Grey, I s'ppose," she was saying, "and I'm mighty pleased to join your company. And where's Mr. Duchamp? I'm simply dyin' to meet him—" she laughed archly, "because the biggest part o' my scene's played with him."

From behind Grant there rose a human groan.

"She's *not* going to play Celia!" croaked a voice, "she's *not!*"

"Allow me to introduce Mr. Duchamp!" said Doris Grey cheerfully, as she wheeled and pushed the owner of the groan on the stage.

He was a tall young man with a suspicion of a moustache which he continually caressed with his blond and manicured hand. What he thought of himself could be seen at a glance, and what others thought of him—well, Doris had named him Cuthbert and Levy had been known to walk away from an interview with him and deliberately kick over a "practical" tree. He spoke largely and often of his Art as a thing which seemed to be part and parcel of his large and well-groomed person.

Ethelyn regarded him blandly.

"So *you* are Ronald Duchamp," she beamed. "I'm glad you're tall, because you'll go so well with my style."

And for the first time in history, Cuthbert was left with nothing at all to say, merely stared, speechless, down at the bony hand which clasped his unwilling fingers.

After that the rehearsal began. Levy —"Uncle Dave" to the initiated—a large and profane person who had successfully steered a hundred plays from the white and virgin manuscript to a mangled but triumphant opening performance, took his place on a chair below the footlights and opened the proceedings. Occasionally he fell off the chair and when his feelings became too much for him he threw his manuscript at the stage, and climbed over the footlights to retrieve it, returning to his post dusty but relieved. As the evening progressed he grew redder and redder in the face, but the play gradually took form.

Doris had played the part before and this was the road company with a few of the original cast and a few new members. As they streamed through the lines of the second act Levy half turned to Grant. "We're ready for Celia," he said, "where's your girl?"

Grant nodded.

"She's in the wings," he said, "and I think she's been studying her part."

He was right. At the spoken cue she entered, her face showing a ghastly yellow in the footlights, her head held high on her scrawny neck

Levy looked at her for a moment,

mouth open, then fell off his chair for the fifth time.

"M'God!" he said, "I've got 'em again."

Grant held up his hand.

"Hush," he commanded, "I want to see how she acts."

He saw. Ethelyn rushed down the stage to the exact spot where she had no business to be, and turning to the frozen Cuthbert, delivered her lines. It was a character in which she might conceivably have fitted, since it was a comedy part. But nothing would have fitted her voice. And her conception of acting—through Grant's mind, in that awful moment ran a memory of *Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night.* It was dreadful as a spectacle, but still more awful to see her perfect self-complacency, for obviously Ethelyn was out to out-Sarah The Bernhardt.

At length it was over. With a final triumphant glance over her shoulder at the foot-lights, she left the stage, stumbling as she went over a bit of scenery, and Doris Grey came on for a scene with Cuthbert. There was the hint of a grin on her face, sternly suppressed, but evident to Grant's practised perceptions. And she was staring, not at Ethelyn but at Cuthbert where he stood, mouth open in a sort of horrified trance.

Under cover of her lines Grant answered Levy's frantic attack.

"It's only a try-out, of course," he said. "You don't have to take the girl. But I thought perhaps you—you might lick her into shape—"

"Shape!" wailed the other. "Shape! She hasn't any shape! M'God! You send me a bunch of spare ribs that talks like a squeaky slate and tell me to make an actress when I've got my hands full with that human 'I am it' up there, and the whole play going to the devil so fast you can't even see the dust—"

He threw the manuscript furiously at Cuthbert and vaulted over the foot-lights.

"Not there!" he yelled, "not up-stage like that. Do you want the star to turn her back on the audience, you idiot—you double-dyed bundle of pink sachet, you—"

He glared and returned to Grant, the crumpled manuscript in his hand.

"I've got enough troubles," he announced, "without any more of 'em humping themselves on the stage and doing an imitation of Eva Tanguay. You can take your little friend down to Johnson's company. He doesn't know real acting from singing into a phonograph."

Grant shook his head regretfully.

"No," he said, "she's had her chance and you're right. She's awful. I guess she'll have to go."

"Don't fire the kid," said Doris.

Grant jumped to find her at his elbow, her brief scene finished.

"She's down and out. I can see that. Can't she come along with the troupe in some way? You can give her the job of wardrobe mistress, you know. It'd be plain murder to turn her down now."

Grant looked at her gratefully.

"I'll do it," he said, and sent for the Gump. She came, the glow of self-satisfaction still on her sallow face.

"I kind of thought you'd be sending for me," she said.

Grant cleared his throat.

"I—I," he began, and stopped.

Doris spoke for him.

"Mr. Grant is afraid you're not built for the part, Miss Allen," she said. "He needs a smaller woman for the rôle. You see you—well—you're taller than I am."

Ethelyn looked at Grant dumbly. He nodded.

"Yes, that's it," he said, "I—I didn't realize how—how tall you were until I saw you on the stage with Mr. Duchamp, and the part calls for a smaller woman."

Ethelyn clutched the crumpled sheets of paper to her breast.

"You're going to take it away from me?" she said, "you mean you're going to take it away from me?"

He cleared his throat again.

"I—I'm afraid so. But I wondered

if you'd accept the job of wardrobe mistress; we—we need one to travel with the company, and I—I thought—"

The girl stared at him, the papers still clutched against her breast. She was like a wounded animal at bay.

"A wardrobe mistress," she was saying, "a wardrobe mistress, when I might have played a part and acted—"

Her eyes were dreadful to see. Grant found a queer ache in his throat and Levy had turned away. Doris Grey spoke suddenly with a little gasping cough.

"You don't understand," she said, "Mr. Grant—he means more than a wardrobe mistress. That's just on the side. What he really wants is for you to understudy me."

The girl looked at her and slowly the sheets fluttered from her relaxed fingers to the floor. She heaved a little sigh of happiness and straightened her bent shoulders.

"I should be pleased to accept the position," she announced. "This part here wasn't really so very good after all, and all I want is a chance."

Later Doris faced Grant in her car.

"I couldn't help it," she said. "You couldn't help it yourself. I knew in another minute you'd be offering her the lead and I—I got there first.

"But you—" he sputtered, "can you picture her in your part?"

She chuckled. "I've been playing for ten years. Have you ever known me to miss a night?"

He shook his head.

"No, but—"

"But me no buts!"

And then, more seriously, "We may be a couple of fools, but we've saved a human life to-night!"

V

THE rehearsals drew to a close and the company left, playing a miserable and profane month of one night stands in New Jersey. It was not a happy family. Grace Fenton, the ingénue, was engaged in looking backward at the time when she had played to adoring audiences in Stock, or forward to the time when she would play to equally adoring audiences on Broadway. She got on Doris Grey's nerves and the latter told her so gently but firmly. Doris had a way of getting rid of those that bored her which was efficient if nothing else. Grace Fenton fell back upon the character woman who supplanted Ethelyn for companionship, and the two sulked and said unpleasant things about the star, who grinned to herself and went serenely on her way.

Also, there was a feud between Doris and Cuthbert. It had to do with many things, but culminated in the playing of the great scene in the third act. It was Doris' scene really. She was the star and she should have played it up stage, gloriously occupying the place of vantage, while her lead, quarter back to the audience, subdued his personality to hers. But Cuthbert was not that kind. If he had been conceited in New York he was insufferable now—his mail having been enlarged by a few mash notes. As time went on he edged more and more upon Doris' preserves and day by day played further up stage, throwing the star into the subordinate position. She spoke to him once, but his answer silenced her.

"Of course," he said, stroking his infant moustache, "of course, if you are afraid of my snatching your laurels, Miss Grey—"

After that she said nothing, but there was a strained look about her mouth and Levy, regarding her nervously, ventured to protest.

"Now, don't you start anything, Doris," he begged. "We can't afford to break up the show just because a trained ass has broken into the pasture. And he *does* make a hit with the ladies. That eyebrow he wears on his lip gets 'em every time."

Doris made no direct reply.

"There's a rip in my dress where that idiot stepped on it in the love scene," she said. "Some day he's going to get bitten when he kisses me in the last act. Ugh!" she shrugged her

shoulders, "where's the Gump? She'll have to mend it before to-night."

"Behind somewhere," he told her. "Have you noticed her lately?"

"*Noticed!*" she said. "Have I noticed anything else since we left New York? She's like the evil eye, watching until she gives me the creeps. If I live through it won't be her fault. She'd cheerfully murder me for the part." She laughed suddenly. "She's got it figured out that I'm deadly jealous of her and got Grant to take away that part from her for fear she'd gum up my success."

"She's been looking peeked lately," said Levy. "Get's worse every day. She's got something on her mind."

"It's her hair," said Doris lightly, "it looks as though she boiled it in lye every week," and she walked across the stage to her dressing room where the Gump bent over a bit of sewing.

"Hallo!" she said, and then, at the girl's look,

"No hope to-night, I'm as fit as a fiddle! But cheer up, I might die any day. You never can tell!"

Ethelyn looked down, a dull red suffusing her cheeks. She was no better looking than when she had left New York, being, if anything, thinner and more gaunt. But there was a new lift to her shoulders, a hopeful light in her eye. She was understudying the star, and someday—. If it would only come soon—.

And four days later it happened. Levy, gazing aghast at a message in his hand, uttered an expletive and hastened up to a room at the hotel. He was admitted by the maid.

"She's ill," she told him. "I—I don't know whether you can see her or not—the doctor said—"

Levy brushed her aside.

"I've *got* to see her!" he said. "It's six o'clock and the show begins at eight. I've *got* to see her."

A voice came from the next room. It was a small weak voice.

"Come in," it said, "I think I can see you now. The pain isn't so bad."

Levy entered the room, casting a frightened glance at the bed. Then his eye brightened. Doris was lying there propped up on the pillows and there was nothing alarming in her countenance. At his look she closed her eyes and groaned slightly, but when she opened them again there was the suspicion of a twinkle in the corners.

"Gad!" said Levy, "but you gave me a turn! What's the idea?"

She shook her head.

"I'm a very sick woman," she told him. "Ask the doctor."

His face fell.

"You don't look it," he said, doubtfully.

"Appearances are deceptive. I wouldn't have let you in if I hadn't thought you were going to be more sympathetic." Her mouth was dimpling again and he grinned back a bit doubtfully.

"Hadn't you better cut out the acting?" he said, "I don't get the idea, but the show's due to begin pretty soon, and you'd better pile out and have your dinner."

She shook her head.

"I'm not going to act to-night," she told him.

"You're not!" he stared at her, "you're *not!*"

She moaned slightly.

"I'm very sick," she repeated, "very sick indeed."

"But what seems to be the matter?" he asked suspiciously.

"I don't know," she confessed, "and the doctor wasn't sure. It might be pneumonia, or anything."

He edged toward the door.

"If you're going to get it, you've got it by now," she said, grinning broadly, and he drew nearer again, regarding her with smouldering wrath.

"I want to know what you're game is. You haven't fallen down on the show for ten years and I don't understand it at all."

"You will," she told him sweetly, "if you think a bit, but anyway I don't know what you're talking about. When I let you see how sick I am you oughtn't to talk that way. If you go on acting

like this I'll have to send you away. I'm not feeling strong enough to be bullied."

"Look here," he said desperately, "I wasn't supposed to tell, but Grant's coming to the show to-night."

She nodded. "I know. He wrote me last week that he would be here."

"Oh!" he regarded her, puzzled. "And still you go right on acting like this—"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"He's not coming to see me act," she told him. "He's seen me in the part a hundred times."

Suddenly his eye lighted in understanding.

"I get you!" he said. "It's Cuthbert you're after, and if you're not there it will throw him out. But I don't know how we'll fill the part. I suppose Grace Fenton will have to take it—"

His voice died away. "But who would take her place?"

She was watching him maliciously.

"You forget that we travel with an understudy," she informed him.

He started.

"M'God!" he said, "you're not talking about the Gump!"

"Why not? It's nothing but an upstate jay town. If you come out before the curtain and tell 'em I'm sick and the well-known actress, fresh from Broadway successes, Miss Ethelyn Allen, has consented to take the part the rubes won't know the difference. Just lay it on thick enough and they'll all think she's somebody they ought to know about. She can wear my dresses and——"

"But she's awful!" he wailed. "Why—why—"

For an instant his arms sawed the air, and it seemed as if he would foam at the mouth, then his shoulders drooped and he admitted his defeat.

"You've got me," he said. "There's no other way out. It's too late to send to New York for some one else—the thing we counted on in a pinch."

He regarded her grimly. "If I weren't wanting to wring your neck I could love you for doing it to Cuthbert, but as it is—I hope you get yours!"

"I will," she told him. "I've got to lie here and miss out on seeing Cuthbert embrace her and plant a passionate kiss on her brow in the third act."

She giggled suddenly and turned the giggle into a groan. Then—

"You seem to forget I'm a sick woman and mustn't be excited," she reproved him. "Why don't you go and break the news to Ethelyn?"

VI

HALF an hour later he had told her. She stood regarding him with an expression which in any one else might have been starry-eyed. With the Gump it was merely a damp and fishy look.

"Gee!" she said, clutching her hands at her flat breast. "Gee! Me the lead—and *to-night!*"

Levy regarded her nervously.

"Think you can get on without rehearsal?" he inquired. "It's too late for a real one now, but perhaps—"

She lifted her head still higher on her scrawny neck.

"I know it all," she told him, "every word! And I shan't just imitate Miss Grey, neither. There's all sorts of things she's never thought of that I'm going to put in. I've never liked the way she plays the part, and I'm going to put some real life into it. You just get right out in front and I'll show you what real acting is *like!*"

Levy shuddered.

"Now, I wouldn't do that," he protested. "Miss Grey's played the part for some time and I—"

"She's a back number," Ethelyn informed him. "I didn't want to say anything before because I didn't like to hurt her feelings, but she ain't got no real soul in her work. I—I'm going to play that part like it should be played."

Jerking her head in triumph she stepped into the dressing room marked with a large blue star and closed the door.

Levy stared after her for an instant, then passed on to the dressing room of

Ronald Duchamp. That gentleman was regarding his image in the mirror and for an instant did not heed the import of Levy's words. When their meaning penetrated to his brain he became frankly hysterical.

"But I won't!" he said. "My dear man—think of my Art, what would my audience think of—"

"The devil!" finished Levy crudely, and stepped out the door, a cheerful grin upon his countenance. This part of the mess had not been half bad. For an instant he almost loved Doris Grey.

Then, with a sigh and a shake of his head he passed on to the stage, empty as yet, and unlighted.

VII

At eight-thirty Stanley Grant's car pulled up at the theatre door. The play was already in progress and he slipped in a side exit, missing the anxious eye of Levy who waited in the lobby. Grant liked to slip in unheralded at his own productions and hear the remarks of the public. It was a typical jay-town crowd, he ruminated as he slipped into an empty seat and stared about him. Grace Fenton was holding the stage with a bit of humour and he smiled to himself at their interest.

But something in the tenseness about him was strange. They were staring not at Grace, but at the wing beyond. It was as though they were waiting for something. For the star's entrance, of course, he told himself, but, vaguely, he wondered. Popular as she was, Doris Grey had never before had an audience quite like this.

Then the green portières opened and a woman entered the scene. She was dressed magnificently in a gown of dull green, cut in daring lowness and iridescent with spangles. It was one of Doris Grey's most entrancing costumes, but Grant felt a sinking sensation and held on to the arm of his chair, for, above the gorgeous creation, rose the scrawny neck and knotty shoulders of the Gump.

He gasped and waited for the roof to fall, for the people about him to rise and throw things at the stage. They did rise, some of them, to their feet, but they did not throw things. Instead, they clapped loudly and one or two of them cheered.

Grant sat there, staring stupidly ahead. He began to wonder vaguely what he had eaten for dinner and whether that glass of Port—

The Gump bowed in awkward graciousness and waited for the applause to die away, and then, opening her lips, went on with the part.

After that Grant knew it was a nightmare. Nothing like that could happen on a real stage, with a real audience looking on without murder being done. The Gump steamed through her lines, accenting the least of them with relish and importance which made of the part a shrieking farce. She threw her arms about in an abandonment of gesture which seemed to fill the stage and when she descended upon Cuthbert it was with the energy of a sportive steam-roller. But through it all the audience followed her. When she wept it wept. When she brought forth a humorous line, pausing just before the end with vaudevillian pointedness, they roared with laughter. They rose to her playing and cheered between acts with hearty appreciation.

And Cuthbert, overshadowed by her largeness, rendered insipid by her over emphasis—half hysterical and wholly furious was dragged from pillar to post until in the end he became a white and subdued thing, jumping when she addressed a line to him, as though she had cracked a whip. While through it all the Gump romped and roared, appearing ever more awful in some new magnificence of borrowed plumage.

And Grant, clutching the sides of his seat, watched the stage, looking neither to left nor right for fear the audience about him would read insanity in his eyes.

It was not until the curtain had gone down for the last time and the Gump, red with success, was led forward by

a perspiring Levy for her curtain speech, that he came to himself. Her words began to trickle into his brain, first one at a time, then, suddenly in a great burst of light——

"Gratifying — chawmed — after success on Broadway—great to be *home* again."

VIII

It was ten minutes later that he came to her dressing-room. It was filled to overflowing, but at sight of him she made room on the seat beside herself. On the other side sat a stocky young man in brown who was staring at her with dazzled eyes.

"Mr. Grant," she said, introducing him to the company at large with a magnificent wave of her hand. "Stanley Grant, y' know. My manager."

Then, turning to him, her head held high under a greenish halo of frowzy hair, she spoke.

"I was just telling the home folks, Mr. Grant, that I'm coming back to 'em. Dusé left the stage when she was at th' height of her triumphs, y' know. And I—well, I was just announcin' my engagement to Mr. Newberry o' the Palace Livery Stable. I've decided to give up th' stage with it's glittering temptations forever. O' course I won't be above playing leads in the town productions, but I renounce the gilded life o' the Great White Way!"

There was a murmur of approbation and awe about her and Grant found twenty pairs of eyes fixed upon him to see how he would take his loss.

"I'm sorry," he said, truthfully. "I —I hate to lose you—your place in the dramatic world is—er—unique, Miss Allen."

"I know," she said, "but I give it up forever!"

With a gesture which was angularly superb she held out a blue velvet cloak to the stalwart man beside her. He threw it about her shoulders with the air of one encompassing a pearl of great price; and then, triumphant, followed by her train, she passed to the door, paused for an instant and—

"Say 'ta-ta' to little old Broadway f' me!" she said and swept out of Grant's life forever.

TOWNS

By Harold Cook

I THOUGHT towns were unbeautiful
And full of sullen pain,
With never any tenderness
Nor gentleness of rain.

But now I know that they may be
Bright and very fair,
For, passing, I gazed in a door
And saw you standing there.

A MAN begins to love a woman the moment he begins to fear to compromise her.

MARRIAGE—A HABIT

By Burton Kline

I NEARLY died of the shock. There they were, the first familiar faces I saw on the boat-landing, Marian Agnew and her husband Sam; although their presence together was not all of the shock. The chief of it was that Marian was gracious to me, and devoted to her husband. And this on the spot where I had seen him alone not three weeks before.

* * * * *

Three weeks before I had seen him there, for the first time in five years. I knew it was he. There was no mistaking the haughty chin, his hooked nose, his grey eyes, the somewhat distinguished features generally. Besides, afterward, there was his name on the hotel register in proof of him—*Samuel D. Agnew, New York.* And the moment I saw him, and the company with him, I knew what he was about. This was his fling, the howling tear he had promised himself years ago. He was out for amusement—and getting precious little of it, by all appearances.

That may have been because he was sixty now—and looked it. His hair, when he removed his hat sometimes to fan himself, had that humorous thinness which brings age and infancy so absurdly close together. Yet even had he kept his rakish Panama religiously fast to his head, other signs of his years would have betrayed him—the crow-feet about his eyes, and the crack in his laugh. He was laughing boisterously, too—or trying so to laugh.

Two strange girls were laughing with him. They freely showed their limbs—one pair of them too thick and the other too thin. And otherwise they did their best to look and act a devilish part and succeeded with their deviltry as little as he with his. Indeed they may have been wantons, but they little enough looked it. One of the pair, the more shapely, wore a modest enough dark brown jersey suit, the other an innocent sky-blue sweater. Both giggled and wriggled, and wore dowdy white duck hats.

"Well, this chicken I'm telling you about was daffy on me at the time."

I was near enough to catch this much of his narrative—and was obliged to stifle a laugh at hearing his straining endeavours to cut the capers of a devil. Whereas the girls would have been far more impressed with his wickedness if he had stuck to his habitual diction.

"And this chicken says to me, 'Dick,' says she"—so the tale ran on. And for all his wild humour I saw he couldn't quite come to the point of braving it out in his own name. Above all else, this saintly devil had picked quaint and quiet Nantucket for his fling!

We had all been passengers aboard the *Lilian*, the deceptively smart appearing but really lumbering old catboat which makes pretence of sailing up the inland harbour of Wauwinet, if the wind is safely enough astern, and otherwise noses along under power of a weak and weary motor. Sam and they had been in the stern, and I amidships, with a crowd of other passengers seated on chairs between, so that he hadn't noticed my presence, and not to embarrass him I had kept apart.

Nevertheless at Wauwinet, as I strolled up that stretch of blinding yellow sand, I came upon them again,

sprawled on the beach, all three of them. The more plump of the two girls had spread out her form in a more successful essay at the voluptuous, with the jersey of her suit seeking out her curves. Both of them laughed industriously, not so much at Sam Agnew's stories, I suspect, as at Sam Agnew himself. It must have been that, because their laughter had become hearty and genuine. He was, there's no denying it, so awfully funny at his sin.

Later on in the week I saw him again, on the Cliff beach, searching the crowd for some one willing to respond to his ogling. This time he had bared his opalescent bald head and committed his undeniably spare body to public gaze in a jaunty jersey bathing suit of a brave blue, with golden bands across the breeches and shirt, and made display of what prowess he possessed in the water. For some time I watched him from a distance. Rarely have I seen anything so exquisite as his antics at playing the rake.

Presently I saw a great light in his face, and caught him edging closer to the beach. There, over my shoulder, I marked the object of his interest issuing from the bath-house. Every one else marked her with me. She was tall and she was plump, she was shapely and she was blonde, with a kind of babyish prettiness in her round face and her wide blue eyes. There she came, in a baby-blue bathing suit of silk jersey that clung to her figure, even in the dry state, like fleshings, making a clean breast of all that Nature had done for her. With the stateliness of an entire belief in herself she stepped majestically down the sand and dipped a toe in the water, while the hundred or two idlers on the sand and the other two hundred in the gentle surf ceased all other occupation and watched her.

Sam Agnew had stationed himself by then directly in the path she appeared to have chosen into the deeps. There he stood in his own spare majesty, with his arms folded to squeeze out his muscles into the fullest display of his manhood. Slowly the opulent specimen of femininity waded toward him. Step by step she drew nearer. If she happened to be thinking of anything, I suppose it was of the chill of the deepening water rising about her. Indeed she saw my friend only in time to avoid knocking him down.

"Beg pardon!" I heard, or rather saw her lips framing the words.

"Don't mention it, you big booful baby!" I very distinctly heard Sam Agnew utter.

Was the lady offended? Did she blaze out on him in righteous wrath? Even that would have titillated the male in the man. But she crushed him utterly. With a single surprised glance up and down Sam Agnew's spindling person, she—laughed. And so did the highly corpulent old gentleman with her.

Until then Sam Agnew had left unnoticed, as did all the rest of us, for that matter, the corpulent old gentleman and the other men and women who, it was clear now, were the blonde beauty's companions.

All of them laughed at Sam. Everybody laughed at him. At once the crowd in the water nearby had sensed what had happened—or easily read it in Sam Agnew's crestfallen face, and laughed at him outright. Whereat Sam dived like mad, and paddled away in a flutter of confusion.

In a moment or two I was able to catch up with him, and slapped him on the shoulder.

"Bless my soul, is it you!" he shouted, delighted with the refuge of any sort of legitimate companionship. "Where on earth did you drop from? I'm jolly well glad to see you!" And we touched bottom to shake hands. "How long have you been here? Isn't this water great? For the first time in my life I've struck water I could stay in half an hour without looking as blue as I feel!"

"Didn't you know she was a bride?" I cut him short.

"Bride? Who? What bride?" he made pretence of his innocence.

"The big booful baby in baby-blue. I saw it, Samuel."

He grinned sheepishly and busily scratched the bottom with his toe.

"Pippin, isn't she?" he suddenly looked up to say in defiance. "But was that frightful tub her husband? He's years older than she. Years older than I!"

"They're stopping at my hotel. And quite devoted—for the present. You'd better wait, at least until next season, old man."

He grinned more broadly. "Oh, I may strike her in New York this winter. She's not the kind to be lost in a crowd."

"So this is the fling, is it, Sam?"

With the engaging heartiness of a boy, which he still was, Sam Agnew laughed.

"Yes," he said, "I'm having a little turn. High time, don't you think?"

"How's it going?"

"Oh, I won a dollar at the Fair, yesterday. And the funny part of it was I got the dollar!"

"How's it going?" I repeated—or, more properly, accused.

For a moment Sam Agnew gave me his eye. Then he turned it away to the far horizon, but not so far away but that I could mark the hunger in it.

I waited for his answer, and he turned to say, quite candidly,

"Rotten!"

That afternoon I fished him out of his hotel.

"I hope I'm not spoiling any giddy plans?" I apologized for the intrusion.

"You're a Godsend!" And he wrung my hand in proof of his sincerity.

II

I KNEW what he needed, and wanted, and so I took him over to 'Sconset. The busses now make it in half an hour, but we drove, to have the island to ourselves for a talk.

"'Sconset's gone to the devil!" said Sam, after we'd lumbered along in silence for a while.

"A giddy gallant like you should find some amusement there," I insisted.

"It's gone to the devil. Nobody's there this year."

"The war, you mean?"

"It isn't the war, it's the millionaires. I beat it for there the first day I was here. And soon enough saw what was the matter. Funny thing. As soon as the celebrities flock to a place the moneybags follow, and chase them away. Poor devils, the silver-spoon fraternity no sooner come into their pile than they discover how little there is that money will buy. I—I've discovered that myself," Sam added, with a sheepish little laugh.

"So the slide-rule has worked out?"

"It's made me nearly a million in royalties," he snapped. "And that's all I've got."

"Not exactly to be sneezed at, I'd say."

"Yes, it is! It's a pile of dollars, and nothing more."

"So it hasn't bought you what you want?"

"It came too late. What's the good of the feast when the dishes are all cold!"

"And the fling isn't—very giddy?"

"I'm—old."

"You're—only fine. You don't know how to be bad."

"Thanks. But it isn't that. I'm—skinny—and awfully bald."

"Oh, shucks! Money buys the smiles from the booful babies."

"Quite right! You get your money's worth. Your money's worth of cold victuals. For as long as you pay. At least when you're my age. And are skinny—and awfully bald . . . You ought to hear Marian's views on the subject!" he laughed, and not the boyish laugh.

"I was going to ask about Marian."

"And didn't dare? I don't blame you."

"She's—?"

"Hanged if I know. Or care. And neither do you."

I confess I assented—so far as to laugh.

"It was hell. No less. Now I'm free of it. I've got that much to be glad of!"

"Was the freedom dearly bought?"

"Dead easy. I did what I said I would. Gave her grounds for divorce. Grounds she couldn't ignore. It got into the papers. I saw to that. But perhaps you never read the back page these days. Anyway you never saw a more thunderstruck body in your life. She'd threatened separation, or divorce—or promised it—for years; and when it came—!"

"I'll wager you were a bit dashed yourself. Eh, Sam!"

"Oh, the associations of years, you know— Funny! Even if they are hell they're not to be broken without something of a snap."

"Think of it! Homesick for hell!"

"Not on your life!"

"But this sort of thing doesn't—come off?"

"You needn't rub it in. It doesn't—come off for the likes of me. I'm a cheated man. You know the sad story of my life. Damn it, I've deserved better than this. Better than I got at any time. The only satisfaction left me is the hope and the belief that Marian's having it just as bad, or worse. Thank God, she's got hers! She's fat. Not stout. Fat! And be damned to her!"

I laughed. Nobody hates like that without being absurdly in love. The moors were reaching about us now, quite symbolical of Sam Agnew's history—absolutely without variety and shade. Some people find these horizontal lines, in life as in Nantucket, restful and quite to their taste. Some others find such even spaces what they are—a trifle flat.

For my part I agree with Sam Agnew. Queer thing it is, the luck that may fall to a man. Sam Agnew did deserve a vast deal more than he'd got out of life. Marian was one of those railroad presidents or ship-builders who chance to be born to skirts. She never lived; she ran things. Never shall I forget my first visit to their house.

It was on their first anniversary and Sam was taking home a trifling remembrance—one of those marvellous India scarfs, as ample as a sheet, as filmy as gossamer. It was of a dreamy pink, and you could have drawn it through a finger-ring. The precious trifle cost as much in time as it cost in money, I very well recall. The Fifth Avenue shop where we picked it up was crowded to the doors, and we fought for half an hour before we got it. And Marian adored it—until she happened to glance at her husband's shoulder.

"Aha!" she cried, and flicked from his sleeve a pale blue thread. "A pinky pink one for me, and a baby-blue for the pretty stenographer, I see."

She held up the silky thread. "Look at that! There's the evidence."

"That?" Sam examined it in some mystification.

"You needn't pretend you never saw it before!"

"Oh, that I must have got on me at the shop. We had to fight our way to the counter."

"A likely story!" Marian jeered him.

Pretty she was, but the dark eyes widened and bulged slightly, the dimpled chin came forward and the hot temper I suspected was there the first time I met her appeared.

"A likely story, indeed! I'm going to investigate that, my young man."

"But it's quite true, my dear Marian," I tried to assist. "I was with him all the time, and I can vouch for him."

"Oh, you two would be sure to stick together!"

Then the verbal flat-irons began to fly, and I—I beat it.

III

THAT may be scarcely a fair sample of Sam Agnew's wedded life, but he wasn't altogether happy in it. She often enough raised hob with him when he was at home; she always raged when the poor devil went out. It wasn't a bad income Sam was making from his engineering profession; but whatever it was, in Marian's eyes it never had been quite enough. Nothing but the paddle will do for women like that.

Your Freudian psychologists have a nasty name for the habit in a woman of everlasting picking on a man; but I don't believe it in Marian's case. Such women abuse a love for the pleasure of seeing how much it will stand. However this isn't the place for Marian's portrait.

Sam got through it on the stimulant of hope. Always he had the prospect of success with his invention of a slide-rule to gild his future. According to the poets it is the women who live on hope. According to the facts it is the men.

Marian had nothing but ridicule for the great invention. She held its worthlessness was proved by its slow acceptance, whereas that proved its worth. Sam's rule was a miracle. It laid before the stupidest blacksmith a child's key to the whole mystery of minute mathematical measurement. But a miracle is not put over—I believe they call it that—like a soap or a safety-razor, and Sam was obliged to wait for public intelligence to catch up with him. He was also obliged to hope. While Marian jeered.

The jeering rather made Sam Agnew the more dogged in his hopes, but it also made him bitter.

"Very well!" he would say. "When it comes, I'll show you something. I'm going to have my fling before the daisies sprout over my head!"

"They'll be the only things that have sprouted from that bald pate!" Marian would jeer him the more candidly, and wished him his fill of his long-projected fling.

IV

Now he was having his fill of it. Faith has a wonderful way of gaining its point. It is a Columbus that always discovers its America. And nobody was so thunderstruck at a foolish world as Marian was when Sam Agnew discovered his. Nobody was so bored as Sam.

As we drove along the sandy road, 'Sconsetwards, he put out his dejected feet over the dash and exposed a length of his ankles.

"Look at 'em!" he complained. "It's they are my tragedy. Look at the skinny things!"

"Good Lord, man! They're worth as much as your million. Nine men out of ten would give that much, if they had it, to own such ankles. You'd make another million if you told 'em how you did it."

"Then it must be my head. It looks like an ostrich egg." Sam lifted his hat and feelingly stroked it.

"But it has really wonderful tones. Any booful baby would cheerfully kiss it—for a million. That isn't your tragedy."

"Yes, it is! I was cheated in person before I began to be cheated in everything else. I'm cheated, I tell you. A cheated man."

"You're the victim of intelligence. You like a pair of pretty ankles, but they've got to be attached to a bunch of brains. It's a hopeless combination."

"Because—?"

"Ankles are for an afternoon. Brains are for a lifetime."

"In other words, the booful baby wants to be married?"

"You saw one that was. And you saw what she married. He was—fat. Not stout. Fat!" I quoted.

"And married! No, thank you. Once was enough."

"What then?"

"This, I suppose." Sam drew from a pocket a wicked little black automatic.

I laughed.

"Oh, of course I won't," Sam growled. "I didn't, at least. The place is over here on the sand. I'll show it you—the historic spot!"

V

We tied up our nag in the little settlement, and slid down the beach, filling our shoes with a sandy souvenir of the place as we did so. For a moment Sam paused to admire a pair of hand-

some women whom he positively identified, in some excitement, as ornaments of a Broadway show. The sight of them almost reconciled him to life. And in truth they did make a pretty picture, flashing through the water with the frisky ease of a porpoise, excellent matrons that they were—from Springfield, if I remember rightly, though there's nothing certain about an introduction in a bathing-cap. I stifled a yawn while Samuel raved, and then we strolled on toward Sankaty Light.

A little way up the now lonely sands, Sam halted.

"Sit down," he commanded, and we did so.

"It was here," he said on. "I tried it the other day. But it was too ridiculous. I made the mistake of mooning out over that expanse yonder."

He pointed to a pearly sea and a cloudless sky. "And the age of it all came over me. And the long time yet that all that's going to be here. In the presence of all that, what would my disappearance amount to? The pop of a toy pistol. That's all. It was belittling. It was insulting. It was absurd. Damned if I'd do it!"

"And so—?"

Sam Agnew startled me, first with a brief but actual outburst of tears, and then with a prolonged fit of laughter.

"The devil of it is," he said brokenly, when he could control himself, "I'm headed straight as a die for something a thousand times more belittling and insulting and absurd. I can feel it coming. And Lord, how I hate that woman!"

"Yes, I know," I agreed. As if a man took the trouble to hate what he doesn't love.

"But I can feel the tug back to her. I've fought it and fought it, but it's got me. You're right, of course. It isn't that I'm freakishly skinny, and bald as an egg. That's not my tragedy, or not all of it. For a long time I couldn't figure it out. Now I've seen it at last! You know?"

He laid a trembling hand on my arm. "There's something frightful about—about marriage. It's awful. It took me a long time to understand. Now it's come over me. Marriage is"—he sank his voice—"a habit. It has all the remorseless tyranny of a habit. It's like a rubber band on you, forever pulling you back. I've stretched it—stretched it till I was sure it would snap. But the infernal thing never snaps. There's the hell of it. Why, six months ago I saw her, in a cabaret, with a man."

"With 'another'?" I marvelled.

But he missed the irony.

"With the cheapest-looking skate you ever saw! And I give you my word—You know yourself how nasty she's been to me; how she's 'stuck it into me' all these years?" he put in parenthetically. "Yet I give you my word, when I saw that fellow, I nearly dropped dead at finding myself so hot and indignant!"

I believed him. His indignation was still in his words.

"Well, there it is! Once get yourself inside that rubber band, and you're"—he gulped—"you're gone. Have you ever seen two horses rubbing noses in the corner of a pasture?" he broke off.

"I have," said I, doing my best to follow his thought.

"That's marriage! These horses may kick and bite each other in the traces, but if one of them is sold away from the other he dies. That's marriage."

"It's human relationship, in general," said I. "Often I've been lonely enough to miss—"

Sam Agnew ignored the remark. "Of course I know—*you* know—just what she'll say." His heart was now far, very far away from me. "She'll take every advantage of the situation. She'll rub it in for all she's worth. It will be worse than before. Worse than death. But I can see it coming. I can see it coming, like a man in the current above Niagara!"

With that I lost patience with Sam Agnew.

"Oh, blow a trombone in her ear!" said I, "and let her know Sam Agnew is alive! Don't you see where you are? You can bet your life she's as jealous as you. She must be utterly lost with-

out you to scold. There's all the paddle you need. Besides, your fame. Don't you know that everybody here has heard who you are? I'll wager Matie herself has heard by now. And is jealous of that, too. Well! Do you know what a paddle is for?"

"Home, James," said Samuel, rising.

* * * * *

I couldn't quite see the rubber band about both their necks, but there they were together, on the landing, when I returned. . . . And they were beastly romantic.

DO NOT BELIEVE ME

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

DO not believe me when I say I love you—
Surely you have forgotten that we are
No more than grains of dust caught up and mingled
With the white flame of some invisible star!

Do not believe me when I say your beauty
Is like the twilight, or the hills at dawn—
These are not words of mine: they have been uttered
Across the seas by lovers dead and gone.

Do not believe me when I kiss your eyelids,
And cry the world is smaller than your breast. . . .
Lo! we must go and leave them in the moonlight—
Two, whose unprompted lips will know the rest!

Do not believe me when I say I love you—
The stars have spoken, dear; and it is they
Desire again the dust of us, so nearly
Forgot beneath the moon, and swept away.

THE combination of two extremes of emotion gives a woman supreme happiness—her lover's passionate ardour and her rival's jealous hate.

GREAT love comes only to that heart where it was long denied.

EVERY old maid has a sweetheart who died.

THE ACID TEST

By Dennison Varr

THEY called him a Chesterfield.

He carried pretty women across muddy streets.

He was stooped from his habitual bowing.

He once dived into a fountain in his evening clothes to rescue a lady's glove.

He always took off his hat in an elevator.

He surrendered his advantageous position at a military parade to a poor old woman.

Yet he grunted horribly when he had to get up to let the fat woman out during the *entr'-acte*.

FOREBODING

By Hortense Flexner

THE old dim sorrow of dead worlds
Is on the street to-day,
Far wrongs and yielding, unshed tears,
Yearning, the wreckage of grey years,
Live in my heart with bleak, vague fears,
I have no words to say.

The evil conscience of the earth
Is darkly haunting me,
The winds of sorrow rise and blow
Out of a thousand years ago,
Why should I be afraid to know
What things my eyes may see?

A WOMAN will bear much neglect from a man who loves violently

MARIE-MADELEINE

By Charles Dornier

LE mécanicien Jean Maillard avait donné ce nom à la grue amarrée au long du quai du Louvre, et à bord de laquelle il vivait les deux tiers de l'an. Elle profilait contre les hauts murs, au-dessus de son ponton verdi et de sa chambre de chauffe en rôle blanche, un cou vigoureux et svelte armé d'un bec aigu d'acier qui, plongeant, allait crocher au fond des lourdes péniches les bennes chargées de grès, de meulières, de briques, de charbon ou de sable.

Depuis que Marie, sa femme, une payse remanée de la Comté lointaine, l'avait quitté un jour, ne lui laissant qu'une blonde fillette, Madeleine, laquelle à son tour s'était laissée séduire aux beeles moustaches et aux galants propos de Victorin Montagnac, un Méridional hâbleur, grand orateur de meetings et monteur de grèves, il reportait toute sa tendresse douloureuse sur sa machine, qui, elle, ne l'avait jamais trompé, docile et fidèle, marchant "au doigt et à l'œil," et, d'une simple pression sur un levier, tout le jour tournait, se baissait pour happer et enlever les charges.

Il l'avait baptisée des prénoms réunis des deux traîtresses. Aussi, de quels soins touchants il l'entourait à tout heure, ménageant ses forces, graissant méticuleusement ses rouages, entourant son mécanisme délicat de toiles et de flanelles pendant les nuits brumeuses du fleuve, pour la préserver des rouilles, qui sont les tuberculoses des machines.

Il était maître à son bord comme un capitaine sur sa dunette, et, du matin au soir, il dominait sur le fleuve, rue mouvante que sillonnent les mouches affairées et sifflantes, les chalands en chapelets que traîne le beuglement lugubre des remorqueurs. De chaque côté, les parapets des quais montaient presque au niveau des toits, semblables à de gigantesques balcons où se penchent, changeants spectateurs, le peuple menu des badauds.

Au couchant, les dents des ponts sciaient le flot, laissant voir entre les arches Passy, bleuâtre dans l'éloignement, couvrant sa colline d'une éboulement de maisons serrées.

Au levant, d'autres ponts de leurs chaînons de pierre amarraient aux deux bords le haut vaisseau de la Cité, tout hérissé de tourelles, et pointant vers le ciel les plus mâts des flèches de Notre-Dame et de la Sainte-Chapelle.

La nuit, quand rien ne vivait plus sur la Seine, vers le Pont-Neuf, que la plainte houleuse et la ligne écumante du barrage, il se plaisait à admirer les rives d'ombre pointillées par les becs de gaz réguliers, le ciel criblé d'étoiles confuses, et les feux rouges des fanaux qui, reflétés sous les arches, se prolongeaient dans l'eau en stalactites tremblantes et féeriques.

Or, voilà qu'un matin, comme il était à son poste, sa grue sous pression, toute prête à la manœuvre, il vit arriver sur les quais, autour des docks et des chantiers, une troupe de sergents de ville encadrant le groupe réduit des travailleurs.

Depuis quelques jours, les ouvriers du bâtiment s'étaient mis en grève, et ils avaient l'intention, paraît-il, d'empêcher les débardeurs des quais, paresseux à suivre le mouvement, de

décharger les bateaux de moellons au compte des entrepreneurs.

Donc, sous la protection des agents, le travail commença, mais les débardeurs, vaguement inquiets et comme dépaysés en ce silence des quais et derrière cette haie policière, avaient peu de cœur à l'ouvrage. Soudain, vers huit heures, déboulant des grands escaliers, rompant d'un choc le barrage des policiers trop peu nombreux, les grévistes, à grandes clameurs, envahirent le chantier. Ils étaient conduits par un énergumène à longue barbe noire que soulignait une énorme cravate rouge, et Jean Maillard reconnut en lui l'ennemi, Victorin Montagnac, meneur de grèves et voleur de filles.

Du coup, il arrêta le mouvement de sa grue prête à enlever sa benne chargée de pierres, et, dévoré de rage, contempla le furieux spectacle. Les injures, puis les coups, s'échangeaient déjà entre les deux troupes, mais bientôt celle des grévistes, plus nombreuse, mieux dirigée, plus ardente, l'emporta. Les débardeurs, s'essaimant derrière les tas de sable, les baraquements, s'échappèrent en grande hâte par les rampes des quais.

Alors Victorin Montagnac, la voix triomphante et le geste haut: "Bravo, camarades! Les renards n'ont pas tenu longtemps devant vous! Vous leur avez fichu une de ces frousses qui comptera! Maintenant, il vous reste à me bazarder ces vieux sabots et cette sale ferraille patronale; allons-y et en cinq sec!" Et il désignait au sabotage des grévistes les bateaux de meulières, les leviers, les brouettes, et à cinq brasses du bord, les narguant de sa fumée paisiblement crachée, la grue au crops écaillé de boulons, Marie-Madeleine. Avec des applaudissements et des rires, la bande aussitôt se mit à l'œuvre, les uns s'efforçant de couper ou de briser les cordes, les chaines, et les mâts d'amarrage, les autres à coups de moellons visant la chambre à vapeur, où le mécanicien, comme un guerrier dans sa tourelle cuirassée, attendait.

Quand la première pierre fit gémir les tôles de sa cabine, Jean poussa un ruggissement furieux comme si on l'avait touché lui-même en plein cœur. Ainsi, set homme se trouverait toujours sur son chemin pour lui faire du mal! Non content de lui avoir volé jadis sa fille, son bonheur, voilà qu'aujourd'hui il venait l'assiéger jusqu'en son dernier refuge, à ce poste d'honneur qui lui était devenu plus cher qu'un foyer, plus sacré qu'un sanctuaire.

Il gronda sourdement des injures, puis, tout haut, il annonça: "Oui, mais je saurai me défendre et le faire, d'un seul coup, tut payer!"

Et la main sur sa manette, redevenu soudain calme, attentif, comme à son travail, il remit en marche sa grue. Le long cou d'acier se redressa, enlevant la benne lourde d'énormes moellons. Brusque, elle tourna du côté du quai, droit sur le groupe où gesticulait le meneur. Un déclic bref, et la charge, en bruit de tonnerre, s'écroula sur eux, et, dans la fuite éperdue de tous, il n'y eut plus, sur le pavé, parmi les corps écrasés, que la cravate de Montagnac, dont la tache, plus rouge peu à peu, au soleil ruisselant, s'élargissait. . . .

HANDSOME MEN

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Britain's Women Workers

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ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

ALL the beautiful furs and other lovely and alluring frivolities that fill the shop windows are far beyond the modest purse of many a war-stricken woman; but luckily many fascinating and warm garments can be evolved out of last year's frocks and coats, for Dame Fashion is kind, and some of the most chic models are being made from odd bits of all sorts of materials. Take the little short sacque coat of kimono persuasion for instance; one of the most attractive I have seen which came from one of our leading Houses, had a large cross-over collar of grey lapin, while the top of the coat was made entirely of black velvet to the depth of about twelve inches. To this was attached a band of smoked banana coloured velvet—if you can imagine what a banana would look like under the circumstances!—which band was about five inches in depth, and finished the wide sleeves also. Attached to it was a band of grey corduroy, about eight inches deep with the stripes going round the figure. The sleeves were bell-shaped. The whole effect that of a short cape-like kimono coat. With it was worn a narrow black skirt and an exceedingly smart black velvet toque, with wing-like bows at the back. These little short sacques share the autumn honours with the cloak which is gaining in popularity every day, but so far is only worn by the most exclusive people. It is not the cloak of a year ago, but a draped affair, worn dragged up round the figure, giving a wide appearance at the top where the elbows hold it outwards, from whence it tapers off to extreme narrowness at the feet. These cloaks are usually topped by a large fur collar. I met one in Bond Street to-day. The top and hem were of black cloth, while the middle part was made of rucked black charmeuse, and it reached to just below the knees, which is the correct length for a cloak to be. These cloaks are extremely artistic, particularly so when worn by the slim and graceful, as they hide merely to reveal, which after all is the highest form of subtle art.

War-time activities have abolished the elaborate day frock very effectually, but the evening models that are being shown are more beautiful and complicated than ever. They almost defy description as they are mostly of a very ethereal nature, and depend for their character on clever drapery effects. One particularly beautiful model exhibited at a recent dress parade is well worth describing. It was black, a soft, elusive affair, the skirt consisting of layers of chiffon and wide filmy lace cunningly arranged, the one seeming to merge into the other, while the waist was indicated, but not defined, by rows and rows of jet beads. The whole of the back from the shoulders to just above the hips consisted of a panel composed of strings of jet, rather like an Indian "chick." The sleeves were merely little chiffon transparencies to the elbow. The back was cut rather high and the front very low, which is rather reversing the present order of things, and it was finished off with a long loose narrow fish tail of charmeuse suspended from the waist and trailing on the ground slightly to one side. A touch of the charmeuse found its way round the front of the corsage too, above the jet beads. A curious feature of the newest frock is that it is made of two and three materials combined—a very practical conceit in these hard times.

One big Paris firm favours ostrich feather trimming of the lancer persuasion that looks like fringe for its tulle dance frocks. Fringe is again with us, and is enjoying more popularity than it has known since those early Victorian days when our grandmothers took it to their hearts: but although we have adopted Victorian fringes of silk and wool, I am quite sure that era never had the fringe of monkey fur that is to be found on the house frocks of the rich to-day.

Beautifying Barbara.

By MIMOSA.

How a Plain Girl was Made Pretty.

BARBARA had always been considered the ugly duckling of the family, and certainly no one would have voted her attractive the day she called on me, and told me how tired she was of being classed amongst the dull and uninteresting women of her set.

To tell the truth, Barbara had fallen in love, and was anxious, as she had never been before, to appear at her best. She wasn't a flapper; she was twenty-eight, but there were possibilities in her, and I promised her that if she would follow my advice carefully, she wouldn't recognise her own reflection in the mirror in a month's time.

Her Complexion.

WITH a good complexion the plainest features look attractive, but Barbara's unfortunately left much to be desired. It was muddy, and there were blackheads around the nose and mouth, caused, I think, through using impure toilet soaps. For the dull muddy look I made her rub a little pure mercolised wax gently into the face and neck every night, leaving on the skin till the next morning. This very gently and imperceptibly peeled off all the dead, dull outer cuticle, leaving the fresh young complexion underneath, and giving her a skin as clear and fresh as a baby's. The blackheads were soon removed. A stymol tablet was dissolved in hot water, and the face bathed and gently dried. After two applications all signs of the blackheads had disappeared.

Beautifying Her Hair.

BARBARA had a fairly good head of hair, but it had been very much neglected. I don't know what she had shampooed it with, but it certainly wasn't the right stuff; for her hair was dull and lifeless, without the bright lights it should have possessed, there was no wave in it, and it appeared to be falling out rather more than was natural.

So I made her get some stallax at the chemist's, and give it a good shampoo. A stallax shampoo leaves the hair soft, silky and glossy, and no rinsing is necessary. After one shampoo a most marked improvement could be noticed, and by the time Barbara had used it three times, with an interval of a fortnight between each shampoo, you would not have recognised it as the same head of hair. Then to stop the fall I advised her to get two ounces of boranium, and mix it with water and a little Bay Rum. This she dabbed into the roots every night, and it not only stopped the fall, but gave the hair great vitality.

A Little Colour to the Cheeks.

BARBARA is one of those girls who are much improved by a little colour in the cheeks, but unfortunately she has none naturally. So I suggested that she should get some colliandum and apply a very little to the cheeks with a small piece of cotton wool. The most critical observer cannot detect that a colour given by this method is not natural, for this wonderful powder is just the correct tint, and has an advantage which no other atificial colour has; it deepens slightly in a warm atmosphere, and thus appears absolutely natural.

A "TAX" ON WINDOWS!

Lena Ashwell's Ingenious Scheme

If hostilities were to cease dramatically overnight, and the war came to its long-awaited close, one movement at least would continue to remain unaffected for some long time after "the duration." It is with the object of maintaining that movement—the Concerts at the Front—that Miss Lena Ashwell has devised a novel form of "Window Tax," rather less drastic than that imposed upon England in 1697.

Miss Ashwell's notion, an improvement upon the flag day idea, assumes the form of a small and most artistic window transparency, easily affixed to the window pane. It depicts a scene at an al fresco concert in France, an outward sign that the purchaser, in Miss Ashwell's words, has helped to send "mirth and melody, a little love and a thought of home to your own men, giving them further heart to strive against the terrible hardships we shall never know."

Plans are maturing for a national campaign, and there is every reason to anticipate that this truly national tax will be widely and readily paid. No doubt, the patriotic motorist will come to the fore by utilising these pictures on his windscreen.

Inaugurated as far back as February, 1915, these "Concerts at the Front" have given pleasure in camp, hospital, bases, rest camps and firing line to millions of men in France and the East. The entertainments embody the most varied fare. From Shakespeare to Shaw, from violin concerto to ventriloquial "turn," from the contralto solo to the chorus song, their appeal to all tastes is self-evident.

Tales, merry and pathetic, continue to arrive at headquarters (44, South Molton Street, W.) and make up a very "human" budget indeed. The other day, before a well-known artist opened his mouth, he was cheered to the echo by his khaki audience. The cheering grew and grew, without apparent reason. It transpired, later, that they cheered his grey tweed suit, emblem of the civil life they'd left behind them! Then they cheered the artiste for his clever "turn."

CARE OF THE SKIN

Do you nourish your skin? If you do not, you will find it losing elasticity and colour and becoming wrinkled and coarse before its time.

Women have very little time and energy to spend on beautifying in these days, but the use of and the rubbing in of a little Ganesh Eastern oil, should become a matter of habit. It takes only a few minutes and the result is a very valuable extension of the time limit.

We are young as long as we look young, remember, and looking young makes one feel so. The woman who has naturally a too greasy skin should use Mrs. Adair's Sulphur Lotion, which renders powder an unnecessary adjunct. Powder on a too greasy skin is apt to lead to enlarged pores, than which nothing is more unsightly. If you just go to or write to a thoroughly reliable specialist such as Mrs. Adair she will put you on the right road, very little time and money need be spent in keeping one's youthful appearance if due care is constantly exercised.

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